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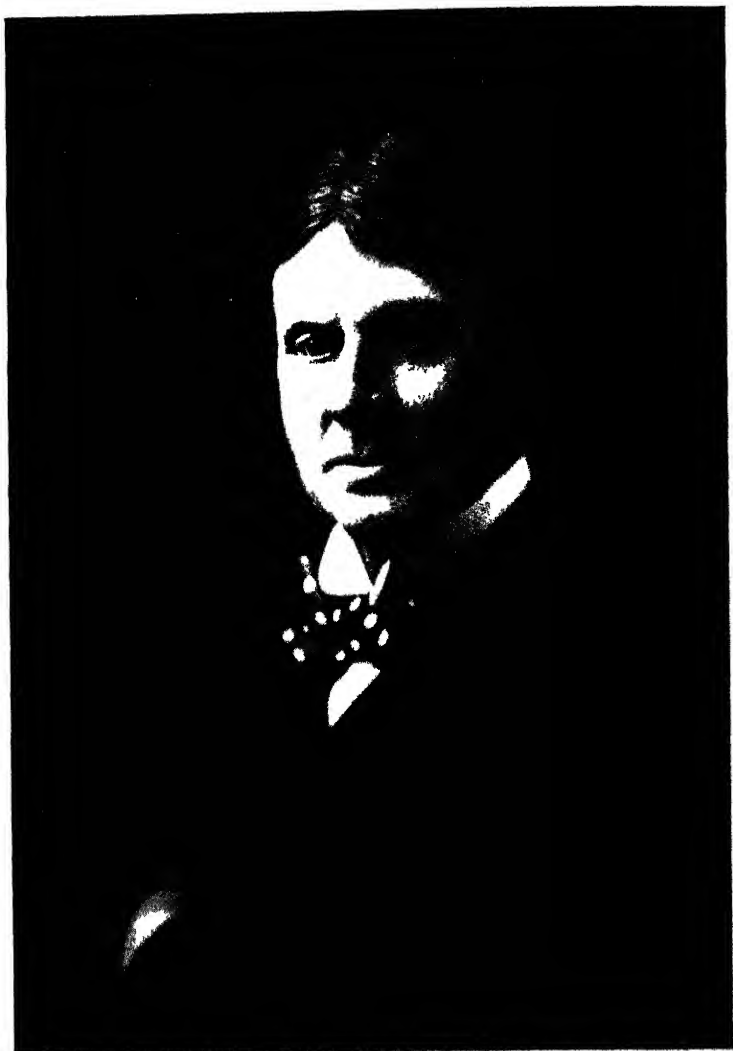


Photo by Russell

Yours sincerely,
W. Pete Ridge

A STORY TELLER

FORTY YEARS IN LONDON

BY

W. PETT RIDGE

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON

Made and Printed in Great Britain.
T. and A. CONSTABLE LTD., Printers, Edinburgh.

TO
MY OWN DEAR PEOPLE

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THE records say that the year opened 'under circumstances so inauspicious as to justify the most gloomy apprehensions,' but this, I feel sure, was not entirely due to my arrival in London. The years have a trick of starting in this manner. To myself, town gave a chilly welcome. Resolved to make a good beginning, I, on leaving the office where I was to earn twenty-one shillings each week, payable on Fridays, walked over London Bridge and, near the Railway Approach, entered a doorway to take my first Turkish bath. Outside the weather was the weather to be expected in January; moderate snow throughout the day, frost. I went through the process of rubbing and scrubbing and baking, and realised that town provided luxuries which a village in Kent had never been able to supply.

When I came out, a terrific snowstorm was raging. Omnibuses, official and pirate, hansoms and four-wheelers were huddled up near the Brighton station unable to move. Two men were walking with veils over their faces. I crossed, with difficulty, to the South Eastern station, and a journey by train that ordinarily took twelve minutes occupied just over two hours. At New Cross the snowfall was some feet deep. All my strength was needed to forge along the impeded streets to the small house which my mother and my sisters and I had taken. Folk told us that no such experience had happened before

during their acquaintance with London ; I have never witnessed anything like it since. The next day, traffic in London was suspended and the theatres were closed.

Also, I happened once to be in an up-train which, leaving London Bridge, should have gone into Cannon Street. Near the junction at Boro' Market, one-half of the train did go on in this direction ; the rest, by jumping the metals, tried to make for Charing Cross. The consequent wrench sent two carriages aslant over the wall of the market ; there was a smashing of wood and a tremendous creaking, and a plump young woman in my compartment was thrown across. I discovered that the footboard of the carriage had been wrenched off, and, opening the door, I jumped down to the ballast. Folk with signs of damage were being helped along, and some one said that two passengers were killed. The plump young woman in the compartment hesitated, and I promised to help her in the descent. I think she must have jumped with a certain impetuosity ; at any rate, I was sent backwards, hitting the back of my head against a steel rail. I have no further charges of unkindness to bring against London.

I joined the Birkbeck Institution in Southampton Buildings, because I ascertained that abridged education in the country had not sufficiently furnished me for City life. The Birkbeck had earlier been called a Mechanics' Institute, and it was in opening it that Lord Brougham made use of the phrase, 'The schoolmaster is abroad !' In course of time a certain view was taken of these words ; Brougham simply meant that teachers were prepared to give their services to the evening pupils. George

Birkbeck, who became Master of Downing, was, in my youthful years, the President ; the principal was Mr. George M. Norris, by day a first-class clerk in the Education Office. The entrance to the warren of rooms went through the old Birkbeck Bank, near the western gateway of Staple Inn ; beyond, and on the same floor, was the theatre, and here on Wednesday nights were lectures and entertainments with such men as George Grossmith, Samuel Brandram, Fred Villiers (the war correspondent), Sir Robert Ball, Max O'Rell, Boyd Carpenter. Many of the lecturers were orators, and behaved accordingly ; nowadays those of us who go on public platforms use few gestures, and talk composedly. In the elocution class, conducted by a Mr. Ohlson—the teachers were called professors, but they had no right to the title—I heard of a clever former student named Arthur Wing Pinero, who in the current year produced three plays : *The Money Spinner* at the St. James's ; *Impudence* at the Folly in King William Street, Strand ; and *The Squire* at the St. James's. In the class-rooms I met William Bull, afterwards member for Hammersmith ; Clement K. Shorter, preparing to become a distinguished editor ; Sidney Webb and Miss Beatrice Potter (they married in '92), and Arthur Shirley, a dear good fellow, and a resolute dramatist. All the students were engaged in business during the hours of the day, and we invariably arrived in desperate haste on the very edge of time. A former school-fellow of mine at Marden and I were made honorary secretaries of the debating society ; we carried out our task with great seriousness. In one winter, the members decided :

(a) That entail and primogeniture as established by law should be abolished.

(b) That Mr. Gladstone's Government continued to merit the support and confidence of the people.

(c) That it was unjust women should be excluded from the Parliamentary Franchise.

(d) That it was desirable to give further facilities for the recreation and instruction of the people by the opening, for some hours on Sundays, of the National Museums and Galleries. (This portentous resolution seems to have been in my name.)

We were a reforming lot, with a few cross-bench youths, and one or two who always begged to be allowed 'to express complete disagreement with the previous speaker.' The trouble was to make an audience. Once, Sir Charles Dilke spoke for half an hour to fifteen members, but this was after the case with which he was connected, and his popularity had waned ; music-hall comedians alone took special notice of him.

One reason why the ordinary youth felt attracted to demure places like the Birkbeck was that other attractions were not excessively compelling. The music-halls, in particular, involved a sheer waste of money. At the Pavilion and at the Oxford I often found myself in sympathy with the gallery man who, at a pause in some dreary entertainment, wailed out :

' Oh, my poor shillin' ! '

Looking back, it does seem the music-hall was devoid of any allurements. The male performers had large, raucous voices ; their risky allusions were never amusing, and they often had the air of men who accepted, too eagerly, the liquid refreshment suggested by admirers. Drink, indeed, was the

note of these places of entertainment. The bar would take no denial ; perambulating waiters became satirical when orders arrived infrequently. At Gatti's, near the foot of Villiers Street, you paid sixpence to go in, and one-half of this sum was returned to you in undrinkable alcohol. Even the Promenade Concerts at Covent Garden were run obviously enough for the sake, not of music, but for the encouragement of the sale of liquor. When the consumer became riotous, he was thrown out by the attendants into Bow Street.

The theatres were on a better scale. For one thing, prices of admission had a reasonable air. (I came to London too late to gain the advantage of half-price at nine o'clock.) True, the pit and gallery made no attempt to furnish comfort, and in the large houses there were seats placed where you could not obtain a view of any part of the stage, and where, so far as hearing was concerned, you might as well have remained outside. But the play-bills were good. They had a scent, provided by Rimmel, and I cannot now think of the perfume without a sense of joyfulness ; they were goffered at the edges, and the ink smudged easily. To allure the economical there was, at times, a theatre which kept open house, and you could find complimentary tickets on the counter of any tobacconist's. Once inside, generosity ended. You were charged sixpence for everything. To the Imperial Theatre, under a certain management, a patron once went, prepared to resist these fees.

'Leave your overcoat,' directed the official of the cloak-room.

'I haven't an overcoat,' answered the patron.

‘ Leave your hat.’

‘ I haven’t a hat !’

‘ Leave your walking-stick.’

‘ I haven’t a walking-stick !’

‘ Then,’ said the official heatedly, ‘ you dashed well go out and buy one.’

At the Park Theatre, in Camden Town, I saw a play with the comprehensive and sufficiently descriptive title of *Winona, the Sioux and Queen, or the Death Shot and the Dog of the Prairie* ; I cannot think I paid for admission. I did expend money at the Princess’s Theatre in Oxford Street—I often wonder what the place can be like now ; it has been closed and for sale these many years—and there I saw *The Lights of London*, with Wilson Barrett and Miss Eastlake at the head of the company. Wilson Barrett was a shortish man with a high voice, and a deportment of magnificence. I found myself ready to accept the story of two young actors in his theatre who wrote a farcical comedy, and begged him to read it and give an opinion. Wilson Barrett, in handing back the manuscript after perusal, said austere-ly :

‘ It has no message.’

A friend of mine did a play for Miss Eastlake. At rehearsal he noticed that in Act Two she entered, drying her eyes with a handkerchief. To his inquiries, she explained that the curtain of Act One had left her weeping, and he pointed out that fifteen years were supposed to elapse between the two acts ; Miss Eastlake argued that mere passing of time made no difference. The audience, having seen her in tears, would expect to discover traces of distress when she came on next. Miss Eastlake had her own way.

Also, on one of those tremendous nights in early playgoing days when the waiting outside was a joy, and the experiences within a felicity, I saw Booth, the American actor, play in *King Lear*. It had not been done, I fancy, in London for some time, and people seated near to me endured it with an air of pained resignation. When the scene between the demented King and his daughter Goneril was ended, a matronly lady in a private box turned to another matronly lady in the next private box :

‘ Rather,’ she said, in tones which could be heard all over the theatre, ‘ rather an unpleasant family, these Lears ! ’

In that first year of my London life I read *Sunrise*, by William Black ; reading it because I had always read each book of his as it appeared. William Black died in '98, and him I never met, but I had a great friendship for the family. The widow and the daughters remained in the large house at Paston Square, Brighton, and the rooms were filled with details associated with the novelist ; a portrait by John Pettie, and other tributes from contemporaries. I believe—but perhaps I do not care to put myself to the test—that I could read William Black’s books now with something of the relish I first brought to them.

I fell in love with Miss Cissy Grahame at the earliest possible moment ; she was a delightful young actress, and generally to be found in curtain-raisers and comedies at the Globe Theatre. I seem to have allowed a certain delay to occur in telling my love ; the distance between gallery and footlights must be my excuse. I found her the other day managing a very large printing and advertising business, with

factories at London and Belfast and Liverpool, and a note just received conveys her best regards. Best regards ! And after all these years of devotion. In a short story it would all have ended so differently.

The House of Lords gave judgment in the Tichborne case, and Mr. Arthur Orton went to penal servitude for fourteen years. A judge who had been engaged as counsel in the civil proceedings once told me that on an evening when it appeared obvious a criminal charge would be brought, the Claimant was asked by one of his many supporters how affairs were going.

‘ To tell you the truth,’ said Orton casually, ‘ I ’m gettin’ jest about sick and tired of the whole dam business ! ’

I found him, when he was released, billed as an attraction in a Kilburn public-house. ‘ Sir Roger Tichborne will Appear in the Bar from Five p.m.’ I wrote a sketch of the scene in what was meant to be an ironical vein, and I received a note signed R. D. Tichborne, and dated from Liverpool Road, Islington, thanking me warmly, and declaring that my support was valuable. The stout old gentleman tried everything, with the exception of work, as a manner of gaining a livelihood ; he finished by making a complete admission of the frauds, and subsequently withdrew the admission.

My first sketch had been written before this. Because a fellow-student at the Birkbeck had succeeded in placing a turn-over in the *Globe*—a turn-over was an article on the last column of page one, and a thousand words enabled it to go to page two ; the fee was one guinea, and I believe the sum never

varied—because of this I wrote a sketch called ‘A Dinner in Soho,’ and sent it to the *St. James’s Gazette*. It was printed immediately, and I prepared others without any delay; all concerning London incidents and London people. Sidney Low, the editor (whom I did not meet until years later), wrote in the kindest and most encouraging way:

‘I do not think you need be afraid of sending me too much copy. I get an enormous amount from various quarters, but I am generally pleased to make use of yours.’

And Sidney Low must take a share of the blame for the fact that I began to write short stories. I seem to have had a trace of modesty in my disposition, for, continuing to send in the sketches, handwritten, I forwarded the stories, typed, from the Birkbeck, and signed by the name of Warwick Simpson. These, too, were accepted, and I had the experience, one glorious Saturday afternoon, of pulling off a double event; the *St. James’s* printed a sketch by W. Pett Ridge and, in the same issue, a story by Warwick Simpson. And one day, in coming out of the city office where I was engaged, under a chief who took even more interest in my small literary experiments than I myself showed, I saw on the *St. James’s* poster my own name. I cannot write, even now, of the incident without a feeling of exhilaration.

To a Manchester journal I contributed stories under both signatures. Noting that the payment varied, I sent a line to the editor recommending that the fee per thousand should in one case be increased. In answer, I had a letter saying that

when my stories touched the point of excellence achieved by, for instance, Mr. Warwick Simpson, then the question of greater payment would be considered. I sent out my first book, a volume of short stories, under the pen-name. It was called *Eighteen of Them*, and the publisher, Andrew Tuer of the Leadenhall Press, said hopefully on the title page :

‘ If the public only like your stories as much as we do—— ’

The public exhibited no desire to share the approval. The contract, I may add for the information of beginners, was truly deplorable. No payment until one thousand copies were sold, and then ten per cent. royalty.

One evening at dinner—goodness alone knows where it could have been, for, naturally enough, few houses opened their doors to me at the time—I met Kegan Paul, the publisher. We happened to talk of Andrew Lang, and I mentioned that a small group of us counted the day empty unless an article by Lang appeared. I suggested that some of the *Daily News* essays would make a capital volume. Kegan Paul wrote subsequently, and directed me to undertake the job. The newspaper office did not wish its file to be inspected, because the sum paid to each contributor was entered there, and I went, day after day, in my luncheon hour to the British Museum, and made a selection. When, at the finish, Andrew Lang reviewed the list, it was discovered that I had, in choosing the unsigned articles, made two errors : an early one I had credited to him was written by William Black, and a later one by Richard Whiteing. The book was called *Lost Leaders*, and it seems to

me now, as it appeared to me then, a good collection of the writer's amazingly fine work. He was, when I met him, not 'Andrew with the brindled hair,' but grey; he had a slight stoop, and he talked in a rather mincing way, but he could be a delightful host, and I revered him, and I liked him. He wrote to me in his crabbed penmanship that suggested intense hardship at the desk—as a fact his pen went swiftly—concerning something I had done for *The Bookman*.

'I saw your éloge of me to-day, with the awful photograph. You have always been too good-natured to my trivialities. What I can do, fairly, is the folk-lore and mystic lay, but nobody wants such heavy matters.

'As to novels, they are not bad history. I wrote *Mr. Kelly* in a short form. Mason (and I a little) made a play of it; we did not care for the play, and Mason went behind my story, brought forward Wogan, and wrote the first third with patches by me, and the rest is mixed.

'Will you dine some day at the Club if I can get two or three other young men, and Sir Herbert Maxwell? Mrs. Lang and I were devoted to *Mord Em'ly*, the last, I think, of your novels which I have seen.'

Mord Em'ly was a good little daughter to me, and even now that years have gone by, she still, bless her heart, makes some contribution to the support of her parent. Before *Mord Em'ly* was published, I had done two or three novels; the earliest, *A Clever Wife*, travelled around London until it must have become foot-sore and weary. One night, in coming home from the City, I found the usual returned parcel; my dear mother and my sisters made no

concealment of their exasperation against publishers. Inside the parcel was a long three-paged letter, handwritten and headed 'Manuscript Room, 8 New Burlington Street, London, W.' I venture to print it here—although the novel itself has long been forgotten—to show the courteous and elaborate manner of the style of publisher existing in the 'nineties :

' We have finished reading *A Clever Wife* which, despite a few shortcomings, has kept up its interest very well until within the last three chapters which appear to drag a little. Other drawbacks to the story (if we may be permitted to criticize it for the sake of the motive in doing so, viz., that the work should be given to the public in the best shape) are an occasional imitativeness, and sometimes a passage which seems out of harmony with the rest of the book.

' Sometimes a "mannerism" creeps in which reminds us very often of Dickens, now and then of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, and occasionally of Walter Besant, and which appears to trespass upon the author's originality.

' Viewing these as only temporary blemishes in the story, we should be willing to undertake the publication at our own risk and expense, and——' (Business particulars follow.)

' Perhaps you would kindly, when you have time, let us know if this proposition would be agreeable to you, and also if you see your way to a final glance through the MS. before it is placed in the hands of a printer.—We remain, dear Sir, Yours faithfully,

(Signed) R. BENTLEY & SON.'

We all have our limitations ; some of us have little else. In my own case I fancy I recognised them, and anyway I did not leave the City until I was

earning by the pen about three times as much as the office gave me. A moment arrived when some changes were made, and I was asked to accept another £50 a year, and this seemed to be an opportunity for saying good-bye. (There was also a hint of additional work which might have proved discommoding to enterprises in fiction.)

I belonged to the period when the idea of a youth labelling himself 'author' and taking residence in Bloomsbury before he managed to get his work into print had been given up. The royal road to literature, it was understood, now led from the Civil Service or from a business desk, and only those endowed—or impeded—with an independent income dared to take up the profession without careful and almost apprehensive experiments. Writers of verse, I understand, still take their chances, and do not mind living for years in Euston Road, but then a poet simply has to be a poet; his mind is too far up in the heights to permit him to be anything else. In a general way, a novelist has to earn a living without assistance, and it is no reproach to him that he should, ere setting out on the great voyage, make a few trials in short journeys. Arnold Bennett tells me he has always practised a habit of burning his boats behind him. To do this, you need, I think, first of all, to see that the boats are covered by insurance; second, to make certain you have a large shipbuilding yard in working order. To the young writers who ask me for advice in procedure I always recommend caution; I can truthfully say that I have ever practised it. But I do not allege that my counsel is, in every case, worthy of acceptance. I once spoke to a young contemporary with directness,

advising him to give up all attempt to do plays. I said he was wasting his time, and that he could be certain of making a reputation by going on with his novels. He has often pointed out that, by not taking my advice, he holds a 999 years' lease of a house in Chesterfield Gardens, Mayfair ; this is the kind of incident which persuades one to be tolerant and forgiving to racing prophets.

I have trespassed on your good nature so far by talking mainly about myself. In the coming pages we will chat of more important subjects.

I HAPPENED to be in a St. John's Wood studio, with other guests, on a Sunday afternoon. The maid came to the doorway, and said :

‘ Mr. Bret Harte ! ’

Not long before, it happened—this was also in a studio—that an announcement was given by a flustered, slightly deaf man-servant of the arrival of the Prince of Wales. The artist hurried forward eagerly ; men prepared to bow, and women were ready to make their curtsies, when Sir Spencer Wells strolled in, and the blunder was understood. In the present case, it occurred to me that a like mistake had taken place. It seemed incredible I should have the chance of seeing one whom I had always reckoned amongst the great men of the past. My fears proved ungrounded ; the hostess very kindly brought him in my direction. We talked until the name of a newly-arrived guest was heard.

‘ Can’t endure the man ! ’ said Bret Harte, glancing at him. And jumping up quickly, went off, and out of the house.

He resembled most people in that he had his likes and dislikes, and every one he met was made aware of the department assigned. I do know he was always exceedingly kind and interesting to me, and that it was a delight, beyond all expression, to see his tall, slim figure, and head of white hair, and to listen to him. We were once talking of the

difference between American and British humour. I think I suggested that folk in the States relied on exaggeration, and he, pointing out that the effect could be gained by under-statement, told me the story of the quiet, reticent man in the observation car of an American express to whom the other passengers ran, crying :

‘ Did you see what happened ? Did you see what occurred ? Apparently the cow stumbled on to the track, and the engine caught it and flung it aside ; it staggered on again and was cut into a thousand pieces.’

The quiet man nodded.

‘ But,’ they urged, ‘ can’t you tell us something about the incident ? You were the only one who saw it properly. How did the poor animal look ? ’

‘ Looked,’ said the quiet man, ‘ discouraged ! ’

On a May evening, Bret Harte and I were dining at a house off Finchley Road, and we walked away together. A noise of cheering from the south met us, and the driver of a hansom bawled to us that Mafeking was safe. On the brief journey to Marlborough Road station we had to decline five invitations from exuberant strangers to enter their houses and celebrate the occurrence.

The last note I had from him was headed Averley House, Farnham, Surrey, and it alluded to a rheumatic attack which had mastered him. In a general way, he seemed to be in good health, and at such houses as that of Madame Van der Velde’s in Lancaster Gate, where he knew there was no risk of meeting the undesired acquaintance, he seemed a happy man. He told me that he had not visited America for over twenty years.

One of the most generous entertainers I ever met was Mrs. G. W. Steevens. She had been Mrs. Rogerson, and she gave evidence in a notable case, but all that was a matter of the long, long past ; the marriage to Steevens took place when he was on the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and at a time when she arranged week-end parties at Hindhead. She was something like twice his age, but with her bobbed, brown hair, and quick, alert manner, no one thought her elderly, and in a room with young women she invariably seemed the most youthful. When Steevens died of enteric at Ladysmith—‘ This is a sideways ending to it all,’ he said to his companion—Mrs. Steevens lived at Merton Abbey, near Wimbledon, and her Sunday afternoon parties were as jolly as one could wish. Lady Hamilton had once resided at Merton Abbey, and on the lawn rested two small cannon, presented to her by Nelson. Charles Brookfield spoke of this as a piece of carelessness.

‘ These infatuated amorists,’ he said, ‘ always leave something about that can be used as evidence against them ! ’

At six o’clock it was the custom of the hostess to make a tour of the grounds, and in the frankest way she indicated to most of the guests that it was time for them to go ; she selected, quite openly, those who were to remain for supper. And at this cheery meal we were usually made up, on one side, of Max Beerbohm, John Sargent, George S. Street, Reginald Turner, and a few more ; on the other side, Miss Violet Hunt, the Misses Hepworth Dixon, and some who, to my shame, I have forgotten. Mrs. Steevens went once a year to Monte Carlo, where she lost all her available cash, and on her return we had to listen,

with sympathy, to an obviously invented account of a rascally lawyer who, she said, had grossly mismanaged her financial affairs. On these occasions she talked darkly of the workhouse as her probable destination, and of relief from the guardians as an immediate necessity ; cheering up, she led the way to the dining-room and to a beautifully served six-course meal. Bridge, for fairly high points, followed.

The most consistently behaved woman at the time lived off Oakley Street, Chelsea, and she was always late for meals at other people's houses ; in her own drawing-room she was ever the last to arrive. (I dare not give her name ; if I speak of her as Mrs. T. P. the disguise will be complete.) 'The quarter hours that London has squandered in waiting for her cannot be reckoned ; her excuses for delay never failed. Once, at a house in Cromwell Road, dinner was, as usual, with a vacant chair, and I suggested a sweepstake with each guest naming the exact moment at which Mrs. T. P. would enter the room ; I made a selection so advanced that it was considered unreasonable, but I won the two and eightpence.

It was not at every London house that tardiness would have been excused. The Hon. Maude Stanley, in Smith Square, Westminster, fixed her lunches for one o'clock, and any late-comer was reminded that one o'clock meant one o'clock, and not twenty-five minutes past. Miss Stanley belonged to the Queen Victoria type, but she had a sense of the amusing denied, I believe, to her late Majesty ; most of us invited to her house had a share in social movements, and she herself had a useful affection for working girls' clubs. There were generally some members of the Russell and the

Stanley family present ; at times a bishop, and invariably some pallid, overworked clergyman who was trying to clean up a neighbourhood or to press for reforms. One of them told me of a deputation of clerical folk which, keen on a subject, called by appointment at Lambeth Palace, and laid views before the Archbishop of Canterbury. Randall Davidson gave, in his non-committal way, an answer, and the deputation, out on Vauxhall Embankment, considered the matter.

‘When the last trump is sounded,’ declared the leader resentfully, ‘the Archbishop will appoint a committee to investigate the facts and to ascertain, at their leisure, whether it is the last trump, or the last trump but one.’

‘Alternatively,’ suggested a young curate, ‘to find out what are trumps.’

To this I was able to give an incident within my own knowledge, concerning a more buoyant member of the Church, the Bishop of London. At a meeting in Grosvenor Crescent, on behalf of Oxford House, two or three of us had spoken of Bethnal Green. Winnington Ingram, his turn coming, struck a confident note.

‘When I first went to Bethnal Green,’ he cried, ‘the neighbourhood was a sink, a morass, a whirlpool of iniquity. When I left it, after some years of determined labour, it was God’s own fair garden !’

A listener, seated next to the rector of Bethnal Green, whispered an inquiry.

‘Is that a true description of your neighbourhood ?’ he asked.

‘It wasn’t,’ answered the rector, ‘when I left there at half-past eleven this morning !’

At Smith Square I met the Countess von Arnim, whose *Elizabeth and her German Garden* had been sufficient, with its convincing air of reality, to give her fame ; the later novels were, I think, even better, and *The Caravanners* was a delightful piece of irony in the style of Barry Pain's *Eliza*. Maude Stanley told me she had visited the German garden, and found it nothing like the well-tended space described in the book. After all, one cannot expect facts to keep pace with invention.

Richard Whiteing was a frequent visitor ; a stately man, courteous in behaviour, and a trifle inclined to over-deliberation in speech ; it was amazing he should have written a sprightly and successful novel, *Number Five John Street*, at the age of over sixty. Monsignor Stanley, in his rare trips to London, could be found there ; he was very good to my wife and to me when we took a trip in Italy. Maude Stanley died far too soon, and London working girls missed her. The old house in Smith Square was taken in hand by Morley Horder, the architect, and when he had done his best, Sir Reginald Brade, late of the War Office, entered into possession.

I have an idea I was never counted sufficiently big game to be stalked by the important lion hunters, but those content to bring mere cubs to their drawing-rooms sent me a good many invitations, and I hope it will not sound ungrateful if I admit that, once inside the houses, my chief anxiety was to get out of them with all dispatch. At times the hostess appeared, in dealing with the heavy traffic, to be just a little casual.

‘ How do you do ? I have read your latest novel ; please go along and don’t impede the landing ! ’

At other times the surroundings were on the overwhelming side. J. M. Barrie once described the situation. He had been urged to call at a house in Carlton House Terrace.

‘ I ’d like to look in on the chap one afternoon,’ he said, ‘ and have tea and a crack with him. Only I ’m awfully afraid I ’d find the band of the Grenadier Guards playing in the hall ! ’

I suppose the fact is people love a crowd and appreciate noise. The mere circumstance that the staircases are crammed induces people to fight their way up, and the proudest hostess is the one who hears that guests have been turned away for lack of space. At a theatre the exhibition of ‘ House Full ’ boards is certain to result in vehement applications at the box-office. (There was once a conscientious acting manager who, noting that a boy had come out of the gallery, at once ordered that the boards should be brought in.) Garden parties where, owing to the stress, refreshments give out at an early hour are considered to have achieved triumph.

A garden party that, weather permitting—and you can never be sure that it will—was not overcrowded and always perfectly delightful could be found of a summer afternoon at Osterley Park. A Metropolitan train took one from Charing Cross, and at the destination an easy walk led to the house where Lady Jersey, at the top of the broad steps, received her guests. This over, there was nothing to bother about. You walked up and down the long lawn at the back of the house ; you sat and listened to music ; at your convenience, you took tea. There were

always people to chat to, and nearly every face could be identified. Lord Jersey had held Colonial appointments, and at the parties many folk were from overseas; all extraordinarily eager to meet everybody, and themselves often far more interesting than the home guests. One told me, on a Saturday afternoon, a story of reticence not unlike the Bret Harte anecdote I have quoted. Of a dismal-looking horse being led to the farm by its owner; another man looking on over a gate.

‘Ever seen a horse in this condition?’ demanded the owner.

‘Had one here.’

‘And,’ eagerly, ‘what did you give it?’

‘Paraffin!’

The next morning the owner came by again, carrying the halter. He alluded to the conversation of the evening before.

‘Gave that horse of mine paraffin,’ he said, ‘and it died in the night.’

‘So did mine!’ remarked the other.

My own unambitious efforts in hospitality were in the nature of men’s evenings at my rooms, first in Hampstead Road and afterwards—when my good landlady moved me with the rest of the furniture—in Amptill Square. Barrie was introduced to H. G. Wells at one of these, and a while later we dined at Barrie’s house in Gloucester Road. Several men were anxious to meet W. W. Jacobs, whose friendship had been mine since the days when he was in the Post Office Savings Bank and writing for Jerome’s magazine, *The Idler*, and I, in the Continental goods office of a railway, was doing stories in

To-Day. Then my two sisters were begged to come to the parties, and the invitations were no longer restricted to members of one sex. I had great fortune in the willingness of clever people to sing and to play ; I was equally lucky in being able to secure from Great Tower Street a fairly trustworthy brand of champagne, and this I dispensed the more readily because it is a wine I have never loved. I know men who talk of (say) Deutz & Gelderman with a sentimental ecstasy that they would not give to romances of the heart ; I can say of it as Sam Lewis, the money-lender, said after returning from a journey to the South of Europe, which had not come up to his expectations.

‘You can have Rome!’ declared Sam Lewis disparagingly.

George Gissing and H. G. Wells are coupled in my mind, although I met the first but rarely, and with the second took week-ends—at Woking, at Worcester Park, at Sandgate—very often. They were friends ; each had the trick of putting himself into a novel. Gissing’s books could not, I imagine, have had a wide circulation, but the circulation was fit, and no man who wrote so gloomily about gloomy people could expect to have a very large number of readers. It is in *The Whirlpool* that a young couple having, after a sufficient number of tribulations, contrived to get married, go to live for two agreeable years in Wales ; these years Gissing deals with in hurried pages, and then brings the pair back to London, and to all the discomforts of home. He told me that he wrote his one amusing novel, *The Town Traveller*, during a time of great mental worry.

‘It was the only thing I could do,’ he urged excusingly. There was fine work and enormous patience in *Demos* and *The Unclassed* and the rest; published now they would receive an attention they did not encounter in their day. George Gissing was a tall, good-looking man, moustached, with a bushy head of hair; he had a deep voice that seemed ill-suited for ordinary remarks.

‘Do you know,’ he would say at table (and you might think from his tones he was about to submit a profound and well-thought-out argument), ‘do you know I am half inclined to ask for a second helping of that admirable roast mutton!’

He had not—there was no secret about it—the happiness in domestic life which fortunately comes to most of us, and when he did seem to be nearing peacefulness, the end arrived. There was something tragic and wholly interesting about his marital experiments. To every one else they looked hopeless, and they were hopeless. He should have imposed on some trusty and reliable friend the task of choosing a partner for him; even then the results might not have been perfect. You have heard of the man who obtained a wife through the agency of Whiteley. A year later he was heard to express regret that he had not gone to Harrod’s.

Mrs. Barry Pain was, without any exception, the cleverest and most stimulating of hostesses; folk might arrive at her house dull and stupid, but her talk soon changed that. She and Mme. Liza Lehmann were daughters of Rudolf Lehmann, the artist, and they had a striking resemblance to each other; each had a suggestion of late Victorian in

dress and aspect. At Mrs. Barry Pain's house in Langford Place, folk were discussing the behaviour of a poetess who, leaving husband Number One for husband Number Two, had now eloped with a gentleman who came third in the order of succession. Mrs. Barry Pain was asked to give her views.

'I never judge,' she answered, 'by disappearances!'

When they lived at Pinner, the Barry Pains had, for close neighbour, W. S. Gilbert, and he was frequently at their house. He had a resolute disinclination to speak well of other successful men, although—as I happen to know, for he at times sent me money to distribute—he could be generous enough where failures were concerned. One July evening at dinner, a lady, meaning no harm, asked him if he had seen Irving in *Faust* at the Lyceum.

'Madam,' he replied, 'I go to the pantomime only at Christmas.'

His wife mentioned, good-temperedly, that he insisted on attractive young women being asked to their house; she felt there was cause for jealousy.

'I have explained it before to Mrs. Gilbert,' he said, turning to me, 'but I may as well explain it to you. I'm too good to be true!'

He was asked once why a member, an actor, persisted in showing boisterous and extravagant amusement over everything. Moderation, it was urged, would be far wiser.

'These are the facts,' said Gilbert. 'He is not quite a gentleman, and he knows it, and he tries to laugh it off!'

He and I went together to a Mansion House dinner on the day he had been knighted, and he was able to correct old Whinney, the butler, on the announce-

ment being made of 'Mr. W. S. Gilbert.' It was a company of representative men in literature and art, and I am told—it sounds, I know, like fiction—that the City plate was specially insured for the evening. There occurred grumbling here and there after dinner when the Lord Mayor's young daughter came in with an autograph book, and started to go up and down the tables, collecting signatures.

'Dashed nuisance,' declared some. 'Besides, the kid ought to be in bed!'

The sternest foreheads were worn later by those who found themselves passed over by the girl.

Gilbert came into the club on a day when he had spent the morning at the Old Bailey listening to the Crippen case. He was in a bad temper; he criticised the food adversely; he referred with contempt to the wine; of the cigars, brought to him in the smoking-room, he could not trust himself to speak. At four o'clock an Under-Sheriff arrived with the news that Crippen was to hang. Gilbert brightened at once, and subsequently admitted that he had been seriously perturbed in mind because he feared Crippen might get off.

The best and brightest dinners in my memory have been served at the house in Brook Street of Sir John and Lady Bland-Sutton. None of the moments in the Persian Hall are dull; most of them are merry. In the company of these two friends, I have had week-ends at Hollyport, near Maidenhead, where Sam Heilbut—the most determined raconteur I ever met—put all questions of rubber shares aside, and, instead, told stories the whole day through. Sam Heilbut took me once to the river-

side in the car for tea. In the room of the hotel at Tilehurst hung religious pictures. To the country waitress Sam, pointing to one with its figure of a clinging woman, remarked :

‘ Is that the present landlady ? ’

‘ No, sir.’

‘ I thought not,’ to me. ‘ I felt sure you were wrong. It ’s a portrait of the landlady who used to be here.’

‘ Excuse me, sir,’ from the waitress anxiously. ‘ It ’s not a portrait of any landlady. It ’s a picture called “ Rock of Ages.” ’

‘ Sure of that ? ’

‘ I could swear to it, sir.’

‘ My girl, you have taken a heavy load off my mind. I was afraid it was some one connected with the hotel who had got into some kind of trouble. Here ’s half a crown for you.’

Sir Douglas Straight, once criminal barrister, later Indian judge, and afterwards editor of the *Pall Mall*, was at Hollyport a good deal. He had a charm of manner denied to most of us ; a singularly even temper, a memory that never failed, and his popularity with women folk was enviable. There was a story of twelve Society ladies who agreed to give a dinner at the Carlton, each to bring one male guest. On the night it was discovered that all, without exception, had invited Douglas Straight.

To Hollyport Caruso sometimes went, and any other operatic celebrity was certain of a welcome, especially if he brought an anecdote. Sam Heilbut’s favourite, from his wide repertory, concerned a young couple with one child, who decided to move from a house to a flat ; the husband, as a labour-

saving device, went off to Sandwich for golf whilst the work was being done. At the first dinner given in the new flat, he spoke to the guests with complacency of the ease with which the transfer had been effected.

‘No anxiety,’ he declared, ‘and absolutely no worry of any description. Isn’t that true, my dear?’ to his wife.

‘Quite true,’ she agreed. ‘No more than there was when our little Gladys arrived!’

There were happy nights at Bedford Park when Walter Churcher gave his suppers. The meal was served on pewter plates (soup, silverside, sweets), and the drinks (various) were in pewter mugs. When, the tables cleared, churchwardens had been handed around, then the procedure of the evening was to take pencils and cards; an artist of the company started a drawing, and his neighbour and every one’s neighbour copied, stroke by stroke. As not all of us chanced to be artists, the sketches were scarcely identical, and the interest came in reviewing the cards at the finish, and noting where error had crept in. Harry Nicholls could always be relied on to divert, although unwillingly, the trend of the drawing, and Alfred Lester and George Frampton helped.

Sutton Park and the Northcliffes provided excellent Sundays. I said once to the host that he surely looked forward very eagerly to the week-end rest.

‘The moment I do look forward to,’ he declared, ‘is Monday morning, my apron on, and back at the shop counter again!’

From Robertson Nicoll, at the very start, and onwards, I received stimulating encouragement, together with counsel and suggestions that I ought,

I expect, to have adopted. He knew everybody, and everything in literature and in journalism seemed known to him, and all his knowledge was at the disposal of any young writer in whom he took an interest. I have special reason to be grateful to him.

The very first London house to open its doors and bid me welcome was the establishment of the Deputy Governor's at Pentonville Prison. His son was a fellow-student of mine at the Birkbeck, and I have, I hope, never forgotten this early hospitality. The Deputy Governor's wife had been a Miss Kent, and her brother, Charles Kent, had a special and close friendship with Charles Dickens ; to him the novelist sent his last letter, written on the day of the seizure—June the 8th, 1870—at Gad's Hill. Charles Kent gave this letter to the British Museum. He was so good as to present to me, at times, small souvenirs of his acquaintance with Charles Dickens ; I valued, still more, his intimate talk concerning the great man.

I MUST have been a very small boy when my father took me, by a cross-country journey, to see Gad's Hill. We travelled from Marden to Higham, and it was a railway porter at Higham station who told us something of the novelist.

'He 'd come down here, he would, jest for the sake of the walk, I axpect, and he 'd be Tom, Dick, and 'Arry with me and the signalman, and keep us in fits. Fits of laughter I mean. 'Nother time, he 'd walk very brisk-like up and down the platform, and never axchange a single word with nobody. A nice gen'leman,' concluded the porter, 'but variable!'

We went from the garden of the house down stone steps to a tunnel, and came out on the other side of the road into a shrubbery, and gazed at the Swiss chalet there. It was many years later that I gained the friendship of Miss Georgina Hogarth, sister-in-law of Charles Dickens, and heard from her, on various occasions, details of the home life at Gad's Hill.

I once wrote in the *Illustrated London News* a short sketch called 'The Return of the Master'; it was not signed, because in the same number was a story under my name. It offered an account of the ghost of Dickens wandering about London and inspecting the changes. Here is the later portion :

'A book-shop, with a volume entitled "The Moral Lesson of Pickwick. By One who knew Dickens," drove him from Bloomsbury.

‘ Back at Oxford Circus, the swift rush of traffic ; the winking, startling advertisements that appeared and disappeared ; the horseless cabs—all these things confused and wearied him, and he began to wish for midnight. He tried to find Soho and could discover only Shaftesbury Avenue. Crossing the road, he would have been knocked down by a dashing, spluttering fire-engine had not two young men in evening-dress caught him neatly and bowled him on to the pavement.

‘ “ Not hurt, sir, I hope ? ” said one.

‘ “ Not hurt, I thank you,” he replied, panting, “ but somewhat startled. London is in a greater scurry than it was in my time.”

‘ “ We all have to push,” said the other young fellow, “ nowadays. Can we give you any further assistance, sir ? ”

‘ “ Gentlemen,” he said courteously, “ I cannot trespass on your goodness.”

‘ “ You look tired,” said the first youth.

‘ “ I am tired.”

‘ “ Come into our club and rest for a bit. We are literary men—or think we are—and there will be some others there.”

‘ It was half-past eleven now. They escorted him up the broad staircase into the smoking-room. The room was filled with the scent of cigars and the sound of voices, and every one seemed to be talking about books. The Master, comfortable in an arm-chair near the fire, listened anxiously. The members were all youngish men, men who were probably in their basinettes at the time that his spirit flew away from Gad’s Hill, and from this earth. His two hosts left him with an excuse to join the heated debate. Current reputations now formed the subject of the conference, and, in order to save time, everybody spoke at once. Many were talking about themselves.

“ ‘They’ve forgotten me!’ ” said the Master regretfully.

Indeed, this did at first appear to be the case. Presently, however, he caught his own name, and he half rose in the chair. No infant author waiting for his first notice could have been more nervous than he was at that moment.

“ ‘Well,’ a loud-voiced man at the fireplace had said, in speaking of a current writer, “ ‘I’ve heard him referred to as a modern Dickens.’ ”

‘For a moment there was a hush, but only for a moment. Then there rained down upon the loud-voiced man a swift, deafening torrent of genuine reproof. Eagerly the Master listened. How dared any one (the young members said excitedly) compare the man with Dickens? There was no one nowadays high enough or broad enough or strong enough to justify comparison with him. Dickens stood alone. Dickens always would stand alone. Dickens was the King and Emperor of them all.

“ ‘Gentlemen!’ ” cried one of the young men earnestly, “ ‘I give you ‘Charles Dickens’! God bless his memory, and keep it always green!’ ”

‘The clock struck twelve. A happy-faced, old-fashioned man stole quietly out of the room.’

I received through the journal a number of letters concerning the trifling sketch; I could not help feeling touched by this communication :

38A VICTORIA ROAD,
KENSINGTON, W.

‘Mrs. Perugini, daughter of Charles Dickens, begs to thank the author of “The Return of the Master” for the pleasure she felt in reading the writer’s sympathetic article about her father. Mrs. Perugini also ventures to hope, and to believe, that Dickens will be remembered; if not by every one,

at least by those whose appreciation he would chiefly value ; the clever young writers of to-day and to-morrow, who read, and will read his works.'

I give this, partly because it is complimentary, mainly because it is typical of the very natural adoration felt for the great man by all the members of the family.

The Boz Club, announced as being ' inaugurated by Percy Fitzgerald, Esq., F.S.A., at the Athenæum Club in 1900,' lived—with an interval of rest—until just before the war. When I joined, Lord James of Hereford was President ; the subscription was a guinea, and the members met once a year to dine. ' At such dinner,' said the rules, ' subjects of Dickensian interest may be discussed.' The first dinner of the Club which I attended was held at the Savoy Hotel, and the president made a speech of remarkable length, and others followed the example. Joseph Choate, the American Ambassador, had the wisdom to be brief. He contented himself by giving a reminiscence of early days in New York, when *Dombey and Son* was being issued in monthly numbers. Of a steamer expected from Liverpool, and eager folk lining the quay. Of the ship coming near, and one big cry going up from the waiting people :

' Is little Paul Dombey dead ? '

One year Lord Robertson presided, and, in his speech, said he had been pitchforked into the chair to do duty to which he was unaccustomed. In following him, I had a rather difficult task, and this report of my speech will show that I did it none too well :

‘ I wish, Lord Robertson, that the very excellent and tactful pitchfork that put you in the chair had made a better selection of the first speaker of the evening. All the same, it is pleasant to be here, and it is good and satisfactory from our point of view to see Bench and Bar so well represented to-night ; I think it shows that bygones are to be bygones, and that fiction and law have made it up. (Laughter.) Indeed, the barristers whom I meet now—in novels—are nearly all clean-shaven, blue-eyed, with hair turning a little grey, but nothing to speak of ; they are mostly up the river at Pangbourne, with plenty of time and a most engaging love affair on their hands. (Laughter.) Members of the other branch of the legal profession whom I meet—in novels—appear to be domestic pets in the house, ready and willing to do everything, from the drawing up of a will to the picking out of Sunday trains. (Laughter.) It is only by inadvertence that anything unkind is said. A London magistrate the other day saw a friend opening the door with the air of a man not entirely used to Police Courts ; he asked him to take a chair by his side. The friend looked around the court, and remarked, “ You have a pretty desperate lot to deal with this morning.” “ Hush,” said the magistrate, “ those are the solicitors.” (Laughter.)

‘ Gentlemen, you are paying such a great honour to-night to a great man that something of that honour may be taken by the art which he practised so dexterously. It was Jowett who said, when told that a writing man had received a knighthood, that it was a compliment to literature, but an insult to God. You to-night are giving to Charles Dickens no title which he did not receive from his countrymen during his life, and a space of thirty-five years is sufficient to disarm the accusation that we are using the language of the epitaph. I think it is now

permissible to see that Charles Dickens rests not so much in Westminster Abbey as in our hearts. (Hear, hear.) It is permissible also to recognise the tremendous influence which he had upon writers who succeeded him without achieving a particle of his great success. He it was surely who first told us all that there was romance to be found in the lives of hard-up people ; that there was humour to be found there, and a cheerfulness of disposition not always to be discovered in those on whom fortune is supposed to have smiled. (Hear, hear.) He was the first to see how rich were the poor in good qualities, and he did that because he managed to get at the backs of their heads, and not to look at them from the attitude of the contemptuous spectator.

‘ Now and again, even at the present time, you do find an attempt to describe hard-up people as though they were gibbering apes who, if they existed, would be properly found only in the Zoological Gardens. The reading public knows better ; it knows that the Dickens’ view is the right view. The characters of Dickens themselves realise perhaps best of all the truthfulness of his portraits. In Canning Town there is a good Mission where, on Sunday afternoons—not a very bright day in Canning Town—they read to dock labourers and their wives a few chapters from a fairly cheerful book. A while ago a young university man finished the reading and made the usual appeal to the audience : what should be read on the following Sunday ? A man got up at the back of the hall and said, “ Excuse me, but what ’s the name of the book you have been reading from ? ” The young university man replied that it was *Our Mutual Friend*, by Charles Dickens. “ Very well,” said the dock labourer, “ we needn’t ’ave nothing else ; we ’ll just have the same one over again.” (Laughter and cheers.)

‘ It is impossible on an occasion like this, and with even informal talking, to avoid a comparison between then and now. A good many of the social defects at which Charles Dickens aimed a lance—and a stout, well-barbed lance it was—have disappeared. But something remains, I think, in one direction where efforts might be made which would commend themselves to the sympathy of the great Master. “ Suffer little children to come unto Me ” is a command, the interpretation of which stops too often at the third word. I have been trying to study these little people half my life, and I do not think I have done anything but learn how to love them. Childhood is no joke where the streets are narrow. The mites become old too soon ; they have no childhood ; the faces are young without being youthful. Few take the trouble to teach them how to laugh. The State could do it, but the State would do it badly ; the State would find a remedy and probably find the wrong one.

‘ Gentlemen, this is a disputable view, clumsily expressed. I shall have your more cordial agreement when I say, ‘ Thank God for Charles Dickens—may our love for him endure ! ’ (Loud cheers.)

But in a general way, the speaking at the Boz Club dinners was good. On the night when Marcus Stone, the artist, took the chair, at least two young novelists present were grateful when at the end of his address, after giving personal reminiscences, he said :

‘ Dickens has been with me in all these later years. I seem to consult him ; I ask his advice. I know what he would say of Mr. W. W. Jacobs ; I am quite sure what he would say of Mr. Jacobs. That extraordinary contagious laughter that was inimitable would change into a grave expression of respect for

the admirable work which is of his own school, but not an imitation. I have no doubt what he would say of Mr. Pett Ridge. Mr. Pett Ridge is following the master, looking for himself, thinking for himself, and gathering the flowers for his own bouquet.'

Miss Georgina Hogarth was always acutely interested in the youngest members of the family, and, indeed, in all children. She never failed to send an annual donation to my Babies' Home and Day Nursery in Hoxton; the daughters of Henry F. Dickens, the present Common Serjeant, were ready to help. And Sunday evenings at Egerton Terrace with, sometimes, George Alexander or Martin Harvey and myself as the only outside visitors will ever be amongst the happiest memories.

It was to Miss Hogarth that Dickens confessed on the day before his death that for an hour he had been very ill; it was she who caught him as he fell in rising from his chair. 'On the ground!' he said, and these were his last words. I have heard people try to gain further particulars of the incident from Miss Hogarth, but she usually declined to talk about it; once only, and then spontaneously, did she give an account of the scene to me. The last time I saw her was at her little house in Church Street, Chelsea. Lord Northcliffe's mother was also calling at the time, and I never expect to see two more attractive types of the old days.

Pinero offered a question to me that I was unable to answer; I passed it on to a meeting of the Dickens Fellowship where I had to speak, and it

elicited no reply. The question was this: Why was no inquest held on Steerforth? David Copperfield sets out for Yarmouth to see Ham, and to give him Emily's note—'In another world if I am forgiven I may wake a child, and come to you.' He stays at the inn during the storm; he goes to see a ship breaking up. Steerforth's body comes ashore. 'I saw him lying with his head on his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school!' The body is taken on a hand-bier to the cottage. David sends for Joram, and begs him to provide a conveyance in which it could be carried to London in the night. And this is done, with no suggestion of interference from the authorities; no investigation made into the cause of death. At Mrs. Steerforth's house at Highgate, after the tremendous scene between David and her and Rosa Dartle, 'we laid him in his mother's room.' There may be some other explanation; my own belief is that it was just an oversight on the part of a novelist who rarely missed anything.

There came an effort—one of many—to elucidate a notable mystery, and this took the form, at King's Hall, Covent Garden, of the Trial of John Jasper, Lay Precentor of Cloisterham Cathedral, in the County of Kent, for the murder of Edwin Drood. G. K. Chesterton was the judge, and counsel engaged were Mr. J. Cuming Walters, Mr. B. W. Matz, Mr. Cecil Chesterton, and a gentleman who afterwards found himself in legal proceedings that had the drawback of reality. One can say of the trial as is said of so many other productions: it would have been better if some one had taken more pains. In the end, Bernard Shaw, as foreman of the jury,

said he was happy to be able to announce that we, following the tradition and practice of British juries, had arranged our verdict in the luncheon interval. The prisoner was found guilty of manslaughter. Counsel protested, and the learned Judge said :

‘ My decision is that everybody here, excepting myself, be committed for contempt of court. Off you all go to prison without any trial whatsoever ! ’

The Common Serjeant can give a capital rendering of his father’s works ; it used to be a set dish, at Egerton Terrace, on Christmas night. His brother, the second Charles Dickens, had a certain huskiness of voice which marred the readings ; old Samuel Brandram remains in my thoughts as the perfect elocutionist, and his ‘ Boots at the Holly-tree Inn ’ was a joyful entertainment. In later days, Alexander Watson—once a fellow-student of mine—has given pleasure to many audiences, here and in Australia, by offering a Dickens programme. Sir Squire Bancroft used to do *The Christmas Carol* very effectively. I think it was W. W. Jacobs who said that the Carol had been responsible for more good resolutions than the thirty-first of December itself.

Young Mr. Brett-Langstaff of Magdalen College House, Oakley Square, started the idea of a David Copperfield library for Somers Town, and in one way and another he managed to raise the money for the purpose. The library is in Johnson Street, where Charles Dickens lived as a boy ; Johnson Street goes east from the northern end of Seymour Street, and the houses are small and, apart from the library, dingy. It is a pity the house at the corner of Granby Street where Dickens, at twelve years of age, went to school, could not have been obtained ;

the sentimental interest would have existed, and the Liberal and Radical Association occupying the building might—in view of political prospects—have gone elsewhere. Of all the many London residences connected with the name of Dickens, the house in Johnson Street is the least engaging.

We had a meeting at South Lodge, Knightsbridge, and the project managed to survive addresses from Bernard Shaw and from me. I hope the amateur performance of Bulwer Lytton's play, *Not so Bad as we Seem*, at Devonshire House added to the funds; I trust it was a success of finance. We were not, as a crowd, excessively assisted by the criticisms at the last rehearsal of Mrs. Asquith, who had a speechless part in the play, but atoned for this compulsory silence by giving her views with strange frankness. The best feature was the delivery, as an epilogue, by Alfred Noyes of the verses he had written for the occasion. He spoke of Dickens :

*' A small boy, reading in a garret,
A great King, seated on a throne.'*

Miss Rebecca West and Miss Tennyson Jesse were the leading ladies; either could have written a better play, standing on one foot, a hand tied behind, and blindfolded.

Miss West was of a party of women writers I had to escort on a visit to Birmingham munition factories in the war. She declares—I don't believe it, but there is no reason why you should not—that a girl in one of the factories, pointing to me at the head of the group, said to her colleagues :

' There he goes, bless his 'eart. Good old 'Enry the Eighth ! '

For many reasons I should not care to be a lad again, but I wish it were possible to know once more the rapture of opening, for the first time, a volume written by Charles Dickens. The next best thing is to read one that has been half forgotten.

I HAVE friends in the States, but not they, nor the publishers, have ever induced America to read my novels. I once wrote some doggerel verses commenting on this truly pathetic circumstance, and I received many notes from other English writers declaring that their experience was similar to mine.

ODE TO A FAR-OFF COUNTRY

On Receipt of Half-Yearly Account of Sales

OH, Land of Stars ! oh, Land of Stripes !
Oh, Land of the Almighty Dollar !
Where'er you lead, the other contents
Invariably foller.
(Thirteen and eight I 've just received,
My ecstasy can be conceived.)

To-day I do no work because
It seems a Day of Independence.
Just like your own July the Fourth
It shall be kept by my descendants.
(That is if, at a future date,
They find I 've left thirteen and eight.)

A moor in Scotland and a yacht
Upon the blue Med-*it*-erranean,
A noble wife, a house in town,
And all the prospect sweet as Canaan.
(Thoughts are as milk and speech as honey
When one encounters so much money.)

But though I know the sum is large,
It can't exhaust all your resources.
What others get, I'd like to know
Without employment of wild horses.
(I hate to think there may be glee
Exceeding my felicity.)

Oh Jacobs ! Wells ! and Conan Doyle !
Oh lady whom some folk call Riter !
Pray tell me what your figures are,
And tell me they are small and slighter.
(For it will go, this joy of mine,
If they've received thirteen and nine.)

W. D. Howells, in the most generous way, took several pages in the *North American Review* to speak in the language of enthusiasm regarding my books ; his country seemed affected by deafness. Howells, in writing to me afterwards, alluded to the question of finance.

'I have never received a publisher's cheque,' he mentioned, 'without feeling that my income was appreciably reduced.'

But America has more than repaid by allowing me some friendship with certain of its distinguished folk. In the case of Mark Twain, I was suddenly placed in an awkward corner, and I shiver now in thinking of the momentary trial to which I was subjected. It happened at a public dinner, and Mark Twain, an arresting figure in his white suit and with his shock of white hair, was one of the guests. After the speeches—he told a story about a water-melon that lasted four minutes and a half—the people moved about, and the honorary secretary of the kind usually termed indefatigable asked me if I cared to be introduced to the writer of *The*

Innocents Abroad. I remarked that Mark Twain was surrounded by eager people, and this put the honorary secretary on his mettle.

‘Mr. Clemens,’ he said, pushing his way through, ‘this is Mr. Pett Ridge. He is the Mark Twain of England.’ And left me, planted there, with this unwarranted and inexcusable description.

‘Our secretary,’ I mentioned, ‘is in error.’

‘I have no doubt,’ courteously, ‘that it is a perfectly fair——’

‘What he meant to say,’ I interrupted, ‘was that you are the Pett Ridge of America.’

‘Ah,’ said the old man, taking my arm pleasantly, ‘now I know we shall get along together!’

Two evenings later I met him at another dinner, and it was curious to note that he delivered the identical speech, water-melon and all, to which I had previously listened. Economy is permissible when a man is called on to speak frequently. (I have known English talkers who invariably use one of three perorations; a City man of my acquaintance arranges for the presence of a certain flower on the table in order to end with a neat and appropriate quotation from Ruskin.)

Before the war, Alice Hegan Rice and her husband came each year to London. Mrs. Rice is the author of *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* and many other delightful works; her husband is one of America’s leading poets. He was so good as to dedicate one of his books to me; the printer, by a slight excess of zeal, and an entirely pardonable ignorance, gave the name as Ridger. The visits of the two were very welcome, and both own the advantage of being delightful and regular correspondents. The last

time she was here, Mrs. Rice told me a useful story. At an hotel young women were discussing the appropriate methods for dealing with the too-familiar male acquaintance. Mrs. Rice gave them an incident of her youth when, in walking in the grounds with a man who had chanced to sit next her at dinner, she found he had put his arm around her waist.

‘ Sir,’ she said, disengaging herself, ‘ is it not somewhat remarkable that you and I have both made a mistake ? ’ The other begged her to explain. ‘ Why,’ she went on, ‘ you thought I wasn’t a lady, and I am ; I thought you were a gentleman, and you ’re not ! ’

The girls declared, with enjoyment, that this was indeed a perfect retort ; one guaranteed it would not be long ere she made an opportunity for using it. At tea-time, the young woman came breathlessly into the writing-room.

‘ Mrs. Rice,’ she cried, ‘ I ’ve got off that repartee of yours, but I was so flustered that I ’m not quite sure—— It was like this. I was out on the balcony with a navy officer. I showed him my new ring, and he touched my hand. “ Sir,” I said, drawing myself up to my full height, “ isn’t it somewhat remarkable that you and I have both made a mistake ? ” He asked me what I was driving at. “ Why,” I said, “ I thought you weren’t a gentleman, and you are ; and you thought I was a lady, and I ’m not ! ” ’

Mrs. Rice’s husband brought this story. Booker Washington, an eloquent gentleman of colour, who had once been entertained at lunch by President Roosevelt, to the scandal of some, gave an address

down South. An enthusiast rushed up to him at the end.

‘Mr. Booker Washington,’ he cried fervently, ‘I declare to goodness you are the greatest man in the United States.’ The orator, with modesty, suggested that Mr. Roosevelt, for one, was ahead of him. ‘I might have thought that,’ said the enthusiast, ‘if he hadn’t committed that awful blunder of asking you to feed with him at White House!’

Mr. Dooley (Finley Peter Dunne) visited us once or twice. I often wonder what has happened to the saloon in Brewery Road, where the proprietor used to argue across the counter with Hennessey; prohibition seems scarcely worth while if it is to rob us of Dooley. Attempts were made over here to imitate the philosophic articles; they were done by men who lacked Dooley’s shrewd humour, and omitted to acquaint themselves completely and thoroughly with the political movements of the day.

To Miss Carolyn Wells, when she took a belated trip to London, I owe the first introduction to the stories by O. Henry. Miss Wells brought a girl friend to my rooms who knew O. Henry, and all the circumstances of his erratic life; she sent me subsequently from New York copies of his earliest books. It was a long time ere the publication of them here brought him to the notice of English readers. He had a special gift in the unlooked-for twist at the end that is so valuable in a short story; in O. Henry’s case the practised reader began, after a while, to expect the unexpected.

There is, when well-known folk arrive at Liverpool, and make their way by North Western express to London, a need for a Reception Committee.

Certain clubs, like the Garrick, are ready to make them honorary members for the period of their stay, but the help of members to propose and to second is necessary, and this cannot always be forthcoming. I have a lurking fear that shy men from abroad put up at the Hotel Cecil, and London, by oversight rather than from intention, takes no notice of them. The high and the mighty are looked after by the City Corporation; business folk probably meet business folk who entertain them; diplomatists, I suppose, are attended to by somebody in Downing Street. But a committee, with voluntary agents keeping a sharp look-out at the ports, would be able to increase London's reputation for hospitality, and it might do a great deal to influence the views taken by visitors.

The large steamship companies know the value and importance of courtesy. I have agreeable memories of big new steamers in Southampton harbour when even captains relaxed, and directors were as cheerful as office boys. There was Smith of the *Olympic*; I am told he could be reserved and distant on the voyage, but at the send-off party he was the soul of geniality. He took charge of the *Titanic* on its first and only journey, and the eulogy I wrote concerning him included an allusion to a memorable Sunday on one of his ships when, the weather being something less than appropriate for a cruise, we begged him to stay in harbour, and all of us—Robert Barr, Max Pemberton, and many others—told stories. Robert Barr, on these occasions, generally told the story of the flood. It was of a man who, having been drowned, reached the next world full of excitement and importance. To

the first individual he met he began to tell the particulars. How it had rained unceasingly for a day and a night ; how the river overflowed, and the water reached his house ; how gradually—— The listener concealed a yawn and strolled away.

‘ Not very good behaviour,’ complained the new arrival to some one near. ‘ I was telling him about the downpour we had, with rain falling for a day and night, but he didn’t show the slightest interest.’

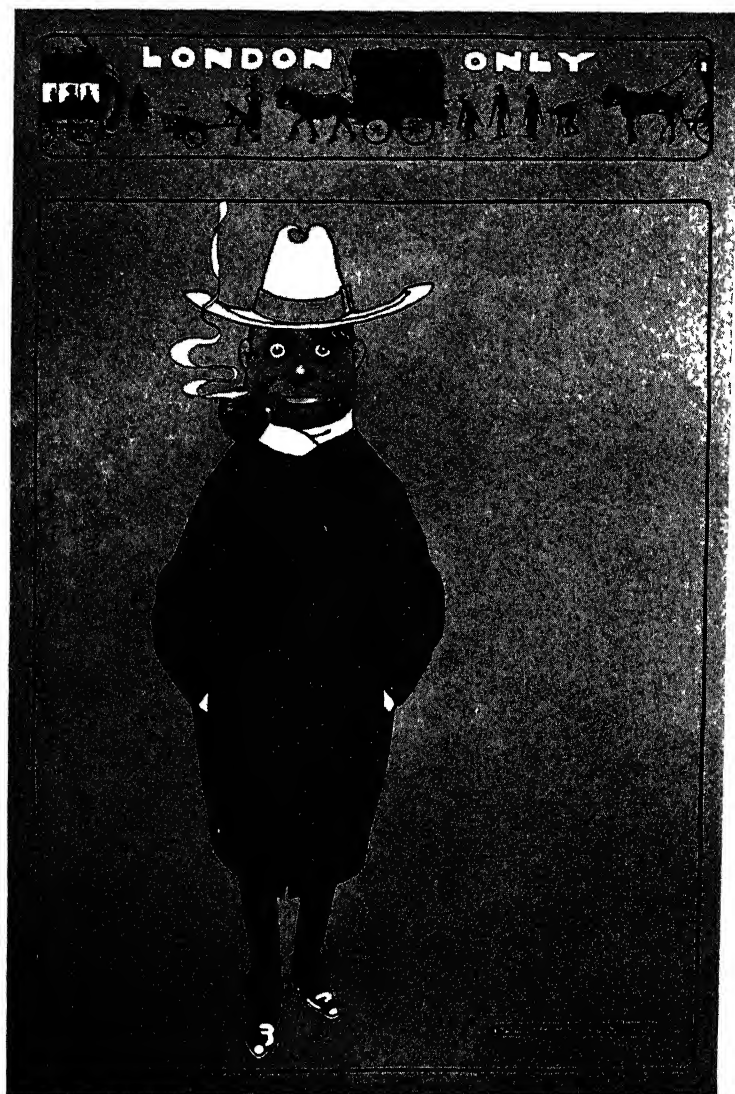
‘ That ’s Noah ! ’ said the other.

On these trips, too, occurred the inevitable after-dinner speeches, and usually they were good. But I recall one orator who spoke of the shipping company as rising, sphinx-like, from the ashes ; there was a reply given to a toast by a lugubrious old gentleman from the States, who said he had reached the allotted span of life.

‘ Ere long,’ he went on, heavily and tremulously, ‘ I shall be called upon to join the great majority, and I shall be forgotten by all who have held my trustful and earnest affection. But,’ with an effort, ‘ putting all joking on one side——’

I think it was Max O’Rell who told me of a side slip which occurred during a New South Wales lecture tour. The Mayor of the town had taken the chair ; the guest of the evening had to propose his health, and he spoke of the old transportation days, when the principal exports of Great Britain were convicts. In light-hearted vein he endeavoured to connect this with the subject of the toast.

‘ I am positive,’ he said, ‘ that you, Mr. Mayor, enjoy liberty as few others have done. To you, when you send your mind back and think of the



According to WILL OWEN

By kind permission of 'The Tailor'

long period when freedom was denied to you——’
And so on.

The speech did not go well. The gentleman to whom the toast was addressed refused to acknowledge it. In due course the humorist found that, by mere chance, he had let his fancy and invention caper about a man who had, in the past, endured three years’ imprisonment for errors in behaviour.

MANY people are at sea when they chance to find themselves called on to speak in public. City Companies have the trick of giving no warning to their guests until the meal is half over. Then the beadle touches you respectfully on the shoulder, and presents a card.

‘The Master will feel obliged if Mr. Blank will kindly reply to the toast of Literature.’

Once, at the Drapers’ Company, a card in these terms was handed to Stanley Weyman, who was seated next to me ; he gave a deep groan of despair, at once pushed wine and food aside, and took neither bite nor sup until the dreaded performance was over. City men themselves have a greater readiness. The City man, speaking in the City, knows where to stop, and then goes on for twenty minutes longer. He often speaks with astonishing ease ; he is inclined to give full measure. But the whole business of after-dinner speaking is complex, because if a man finds he is doing well, he feels there is no good reason why he should stop ; if he finds he is not doing well, he goes on in the desperate hope that he may do better. For going the whole distance, whatever the distance may be, you are safe in backing statesmen from overseas. There was an important lunch at the Savoy to a Premier visiting London. His health was proposed, and he stood up, so he declared, to thank us in brief simple words that, he could promise, came

straight from the heart. At the end of forty minutes, two or three of us who were near a doorway slipped out, and walked for some time on the Embankment. Returning, we heard the speaker's voice still booming across space.

'And now,' he was saying, 'now I approach the second part of these few remarks of mine!'

The usefulness of anecdotes in an after-dinner speech is obvious, but they should be limited in number. At a meal in London given to American military men, General Biddle, replying to a toast, contented himself by telling half a dozen stories.

'General,' said an American near to me, 'I liked that last yarn of yours.' The General was pleased. 'I always have liked it. I recollect when I first heard that yarn, I laughed so much that I nearly kicked my cradle all to pieces!'

It would be difficult to award the first prize for after-dinner speaking; I myself should feel disposed to consider very seriously the claims of Mr. Augustine Birrell. No one man has any right to speak so well and so easily as Mr. Birrell does; a group might be allowed to do it, but groups cannot speak with one voice. You know the limerick:

*'There once was a man on a syndicate
Who wished his position to vindicate,
And in his reply, he took care to deny
That his words meant what they seemed to indicate!'*

Mr. Birrell can convert his thoughts into words with the ease that St. George's Hall produces white rabbits. His speeches read as well as they sound. If I could afford it, I should hire Mr. Birrell, at a handsome rate, to come every evening to me, and make speeches.

And Judge Parry is remarkably good, and Sir Ernest Wild excellent, and Sir William Treloar is as good in his way as his friend, Sir Edward Clarke, is admirable in a different way. Sir Edward Clarke is one of the few public speakers who dares to use gesture ; he knows, too, that the gesture should precede the words to which it is suited. The law can generally talk well ; it is a part of the law's job. It is an education in oratory to listen to Lord Birkenhead, and always a delight to have a speech from Sir Chartres Biron.

For readiness and dexterity I place Comyns Carr, the dramatist, high on the list. He talked, in truth, better than he wrote, and no dinner was generous enough to cloud his mind or to disturb his manner once he stood up to speak. The first words alluded to something that had just been uttered ; a neat trick, this, for people assumed that all the remainder of the address was equally unprepared and spontaneous. I never saw Comyns Carr make a note. I never knew him to stumble in going along any line of argument. I never joined in an evening of oratory in his companionship when he failed to make the best and brightest speech. In the club he was rather disposed to select an easy butt for satire, and there existed more than a touch of cruelty in his methods ; when he died, the butts thought of the retorts they might have given, and gave them.

Of the past, L. F. Austin stands out in my memory as the perfect after-dinner speaker. Austin did charming work with his pen ; he was so good with the spoken word that Sir Henry Irving used to call in his help when the Lyceum actor had to give an

address. Austin had suavity without dullness ; his sarcasm was entirely devoid of offence. Also, you were never sure, in listening to him, what he was going to say ; those who knew him were aware it would be clever. An old Member of Parliament told me once that on the night of the introduction of the first Home Rule Bill, he found John Bright in the smoking-room at the Reform.

‘ But,’ he asked surprisedly, ‘ aren’t you going to hear Gladstone speak ? ’

‘ I have heard Gladstone speak,’ answered John Bright.

To have heard Austin speak was to desire to hear him again.

Mr. Kingsley Griffith (who contested Bromley at the General Election) promises to become what L. F. Austin was ; Mr. Philip Guedalla, of the same attenuated political party, talks epigrams as most of us talk platitudes. Mr. Hilaire Belloc, if he finds himself in congenial surroundings, can be very happy. Better than any of the men is Mrs. Philip Snowden. The movement for extension of the suffrage gave women an opportunity for practising oratory ; Mrs. Pethick Lawrence—who before that had been a quiet manager of a girls’ club called ‘ The Esperance,’ and gently interested in social affairs—became a truly inspired and impressive orator. At Clement’s Inn, the headquarters of the advanced group (as distinct from Mrs. Fawcett’s party), there was a charwoman who, for obstructing the police on one occasion, had to appear with several educated and distinguished women before a magistrate. Counsel defending spoke with emotion of the pain inflicted on ladies of careful upbringing

who, for the first time in their lives, found themselves dragged to a police station and there——

‘Beg your pardon, young man,’ interrupted the charwoman, ‘but I did get six weeks once for banging my old man on the ’ead with a flat-iron!’

Incidentally, the task of obtaining the right to vote served to exercise powers in retort. It was outside Mornington Crescent tube station that a young girl was speaking; a male loafer on the edge made attempts to intervene. When he had contrived to push his way through, he insisted on putting a question.

‘Straight answer is what I want,’ he said. ‘You’ve been talking a lot about equality, and all that, and I wish to put this to you, miss. Don’t you wish you was a man?’

‘Of course,’ replied the girl promptly. ‘Don’t you?’

It was another lady missionary from Clement’s Inn who, sent to the West of England, answered interrupters with such directness and so much Rabelaisian humour, that the Cornish sympathisers, whilst recognising the effectiveness of the methods, begged she might be recalled to London.

I think of Joseph Chamberlain as a speaker with a clear voice who knew exactly how to marshal his arguments; I heard him in the House take part in a strong discussion with some one who had a leisurely, even, uninterested manner, and happened to be out of my line of sight; I discovered later this was Parnell. At Birmingham once I was told that in the terrible week of the South African war, when everything for us was going awry, Joseph Chamberlain

had an appointment to dine with a jewellers' society ; everybody assumed he would be unable to detach himself from the harassing anxieties of the Colonial Office. (From December the 10th to December the 17th in '99 is mentioned in the record as ' the blackest one known during our generation, and the most disastrous for British arms during the century. ') Joseph Chamberlain did arrive in time for the meal ; he chatted evenly with all his friends ; his brilliant speech made no allusion to the country's disaster. Two or three men saw him off at New Street station, and he continued bright and cheerful to the last moment ; as the train started, and the door and the window were closed, one, in walking with the train, noticed that Joseph Chamberlain was resting his head upon his hands in an attitude of desolation.

I found myself indebted to Henniker Heaton, Member for Canterbury, for a good deal of entertainment at the House. Henniker Heaton was a bluff, hearty individual, so greatly concentrating on the question of reduced postage to and from the Colonies that he proved a trifle vague in other matters. I feel certain that, to the very end, he was never quite able to distinguish between W. W. Jacobs and me.

W. W. and I gave a dinner at the Garrick to Jerome K. Jerome on his departure for a tour in America, and Conan Doyle, on our appeal, took the chair ; amongst the twenty guests were Barrie, Robertson Nicoll, Clement K. Shorter, Clarence Rook, Zangwill, Max Pemberton, H. G. Wells. Every one proposed Jerome's health, and when my turn came I found that Barrie, who sat next to me, had added to my notes these helpful items :

‘What shall we be like a thousand years hence?’

‘The future of women.’

‘Comparison between George Washington and Christopher Columbus.’

Jerome, in replying to the toast, said he had prepared a speech which seemed to him so good that he determined to keep it for America.

‘It must not be said of me,’ he declared, ‘that I “to a party gave up what was meant for mankind”!’

And there was a cheery evening, too, in honour of James B. Pinker, the literary agent, to which nearly all of his men came. One exception was Henry James, who wrote from Torquay. I suppose we had asked him to take the chair.

‘I am distressed to find that your letter of the tenth has, by a mischance, suffered delay in being forwarded to me here, so that I have involuntarily left you waiting longer than I could wish without an answer to your question.

But the case is not essentially affected thereby, I must hasten to add, so far as my personal possibility in the matter is concerned. I am unable, alas, and fundamentally, to accept your invitation. I am an utterly non-banqueting man; haven’t for long years attended a public dinner. Even when offered to dearest friends without any appeal whatever; have never uttered a word in all my life in public, and have no more conception of how to “take the chair” than of how to drive a motor. I declined but a few days since—I am always declining—to do so at a lecture by a most honoured friend.

‘Such is my simple and unpleasing story.

‘But quite as distinct is my hearty good wish for the prosperity and felicity of Mr. Pinker’s departure and his return. Let me further add that I am all

this week—even were I a confirmed chairman—held fast here, being under a promise to look after a very ill friend, and not forsake him in the necessary absence of his wife. Pardon these many words.'

It all reads a good deal like a communication from Wilkins Micawber, only that Micawber would have accepted. A card from an explorer brought the same kind of reply conveyed in a different way. It said :

'Shan't be there !'

Henry James, in conversation and at committee meetings, had a good deal of the style that was never absent from his writings. He talked in elaborate sentences which appeared to go on in a hope that the right phrase would be encountered ; often he found his way out by the aid of an expressive and quite ordinary fragment of speech that, coming from him, seemed amazingly incongruous.

The Benchers of the Inner Temple have a procedure based on the rules of true hospitality. Before the march into hall, names are recited in couples ; the name of a guest and the name of a Master. For the evening it is the duty of Master So-and-so to pilot and look after his guest ; through the dinner, through the fruit and wine in the long room ; only when the visitor comes into harbour with coffee and cigars in the library is Master So-and-so able to free himself from responsibility. They were talking there once of Mr. Foote, a King's Counsel, as the most amusing member of the Bar in his time. An important witness in a case suddenly jibbed, and in the box contradicted his earlier statement.

'And this,' said counsel on the other side,

disparagingly, in his address to the jury, 'this, gentlemen, is my learned friend's best man.'

'No,' whispered Foote to his neighbour. 'He was the one who gave me away!'

I dined the following evening with the Red-Nosed Robbers, at the Falstaff Tavern, in Eastcheap, a company of decorously behaved City men engaged, for the most part, in the shipping trade.

At a dinner at the Carlton, I had for neighbour an enormously wealthy man on whom, from his own confession, money had rained persistently for thirty years. He talked, almost with sobs, of death duties, and, in brighter mood, of improvements at his London house which were to cost seventy-five thousand pounds. He had five cars, and wanted a sixth. We walked out together in the direction of the cloak-room to obtain hats and overcoats.

'Now I wonder,' he said urgently, 'whether you can do me a great favour. Have you change for a shilling?'

The best dining club I know is the Omar Kháyryâm; there are others which can be joined without an excessive amount of formality or inquiry. The list of the past presidents of the Omar includes the names of Anthony Hope, Ryland Adkins, Edward Clodd, Mortimer Durand, Robert Hudson, and with men of this type in the chair the speaking is invariably excellent. (Ere now, in other clubs, I have heard a chairman strike a note of melancholy, and I have never found the subsequent orators, try as they might, able to change it.) At the Omar evenings there is no music; only of late has it been

resolved to make the audacious experiment of holding one ladies' dinner in the year. For the rest there comes the recital of the club toast :

' O my friends, when I am sped, appoint a meeting, and when ye have met together be ye glad thereof, and when the cup-bearer holds in her hand a flagon of old wine, then think upon old Kháyyàm, and drink to his memory.'

And the menu card has an original drawing on the face, and a set of specially written verses at the back. The dinners are at Pagani's in Great Portland Street (' I go no more to Pagani's !' remarked old Pellegrini, the artist, sadly, when his last illness seized him), and red wine is placed on the table.

Some of the jolliest evenings were given by Hugh Spottiswoode at the Savoy to those who contributed regularly to *Printers' Pie* and to *Winter's Pie*. Hugh once played in the north for Kent under Lord Harris, and liked to recall that, going in ninth man, he was welcomed by the joyous crowd with, ' Here's another of Harris's blasted hop-pickers !' He made a capital host at the Savoy nights, where we sat in groups of a dozen at round tables, and Anstey Guthrie used to recite—with considerable hesitation, and great nervousness—and John Hassall and René Bull did a burlesque of some kind. Now we are paid for our contributions to the two annuals, and, as notes accompanying cheques say, ' no other form of acknowledgment is necessary.' We gave to Hugh what was called ' The Pie-rates Dinner,' and every one attending had to wear an appropriate costume. I went as the driver of a four-wheel cab.

At Mrs. Spottiswoode's request, I wrote the

obituary notice of Hugh in *Printers' Pie*, and I honestly meant every word of the tribute. Cyril Spottiswoode, the brother, did not own the qualities possessed by Hugh. At Cyril's invitation I went to a dinner held by the printing firm's cricket club ; I left early. The next morning I received from him three separate and distinct letters of thanks ; all written at the club late at night, and each written in complete forgetfulness of the rest. His services to the firm did not occupy all of his time ; he seemed to put all spare energy into the playing of ' Lucy Long ' on the bassoon.

I fancy J. M. Barrie made his first public speech in London at a dinner to Frederick Greenwood ; he might have felt some nervousness, but he said the exactly right thing, and was, as always, original. Then there was a send-off to A. S. Boyd, the artist, and at a dinner to Nicol Dunn on leaving *Black and White*, Barrie spoke, and there was another evening when he referred to the cricket abilities of Mr. P. F. Warner. ' The first time I saw Mr. Warner bat, he made an innings of one. On the second occasion he was not so fortunate.' At a club meal given to him when he received his baronetcy, he spoke of the criticisms applied to him.

' When I began writing novels, people said they were not real novels. When I began writing plays, folk said they were not real plays. I expect men are going about now saying I am not a real baronet ! '

I had to take the chair at the Hotel Cecil when a dinner was given to a successful actress ; she asked me beforehand to write out a speech for her

to deliver in acknowledging the toast of her health. An enthusiastic old gentleman came up when she finished.

‘Truly astonishing,’ he declared fervently. ‘You seemed to have an answer, pat and ready, for everything the chairman had said!’ The successful actress nodded beamingly at the compliment.

In the matter of self-confidence Horatio Bottomley seemed, when I heard him, to preserve the golden mean, but there may have been times when he showed a tendency to go beyond the limits. He had a good voice, he could make himself heard, he could judge the length. Bottomley showed to less advantage in other environments. Sir William Dunn was once ordered by the courts to make an investigation into some Essex property held by Bottomley. At Liverpool Street station, on the day of the journey, Bottomley appeared.

‘Sir William,’ he said, in his most genial style, ‘I know what you are engaged upon, and it occurred to me we might travel down together, and as we go we can have a straightforward, confidential, heart-to-heart talk. Cards, face upwards, on the table sort of thing. You ask questions; I’ll give clear and truthful answers.’

‘How long have you had this property?’ asked Dunn.

‘Nine years.’

‘And what did you give for it?’

‘Seven thousand pounds.’

‘You have had it for three years,’ corrected the other, ‘and you gave two thousand six hundred for it.’

‘Very good,’ said Bottomley, in no way perturbed,

‘that’s one trick to you. Now let us pass on to another item!’

There is in the chapel of Brixton prison a memento of the Bottomley-Bigland trial. It is a very large Bible presented by Reuben Bigland, ‘in gratitude for attention shown at a time when I was tracking down the greatest scoundrel of modern times!’

I think that, allowing for the disturbance created by the four years’ war, and the time needed to recover from it, our food supplies are now excellent. When I came to London, the one restaurant in favour with societies and clubs wishful of taking an annual dinner at a moderate price had a monotony and a repetition in its menu that proved in no way alluring. You can guess at the bill of fare I mean: thin soup, boiled cod, lukewarm saddle of mutton, and so to a lugubrious sweet. No manager would dare to arrange a meal of the kind to-day; no self-respecting waiter would think of serving it. The waiting also has improved. Time was when London waiters always found a subject for quarrelling; loaded with plates they barged into one another; at the end there was sometimes a dispute regarding the amounts extracted consequent on the hint of—

‘I trust everything, sir, has been satisfactory!’

The drawback with the foreign waiter in London is that he is not well acquainted with the language; the defect of the British-born waiter is that his acquaintance is too great. A word of encouragement, and the home-grown production becomes as loquacious as any barber.

On a date at the end of a certain July, Will Owen,

the artist, and I, being at Dieppe, after a motor tour in Normandy, found ourselves invited to a meal in the Hotel Royal ; the cook had been, for adequate reasons, ordered to do his best ; the wine had been transferred specially from a brother hotel at Monte Carlo. This was the bill of fare :

Petite marmite.
Suprême de Sole Métropole.
Noisettes de Pre-Salé a l'estragon.
Pommes Aïda.
Volaille en cocotte Sourvaroff.
Salade de saison.
Aubergines au gratin.
Pêches Melba.

I left for London the following day. Will Owen, with his wife and two daughters, caught the last boat that went from Dieppe ere the service to Newhaven was, on account of the declaration of war, stopped. And for some years France did not know meals like to the one provided in July at Dieppe.

I WANT to talk about the London accent.

A good deal has been said and written concerning the accents of the people, and a fairly level contest has always gone on between those who wish to destroy them and those who want to see them preserved. It is not likely anything I am going to mention will settle the feud. To tell the truth, I have no desire to do so ; as it stands, it is a very pretty fight, and I am content to take up position outside the ropes and look on. If I were tempted to lay any money on the result, I should back the accents.

Notable writers and profound thinkers deplore the waning of dialect in England ; they become emotional, lachrymose in alluding to the subject, but they have no good word to say for the dialect of the Metropolis. On the other hand, I received a letter, not long since, submitting the argument that the effort to remove the Cockney accent was an autocratic interference with the liberty of the subject, and one which would have to be resisted in the interests of freedom and equality. And Burne Jones once said that the letter ' h ' was the great divider of classes, and that until it was expunged from the English language there could be no perfect equality.

So there you are !

No two persons pronounce exactly alike, and the differences are caused by custom of the neighbour-

hood, by influences of the household, by some imperfection of the vocal chords, by a desire to copy the example set by the largest crowd. There is, likely enough, no man so pedantic in speech that he does not sometimes take a holiday ; life would be unendurable if we always spoke with perfect elocution, and pronounced every word as directed in Webster's Dictionary. Actors of the old school were resolute in their procedure, but they did not find it easy to influence students. Barry Sullivan once said to a young novice, in deliberate, measured tones :

‘ Sar, why do yew not speak narturally, as I dew ! ’

The teaching of elocution, in these days, is modelled on more reasonable lines, and the learning of it starts at an early period. In the County Council schools of London, you may hear, from determined and resolute teachers, that a considerable portion of their efforts is devoted to the eradication of the Cockney accent, and you are taken to a classroom where a youthful pupil, drawing a long breath, proceeds to declaim, at a high rate of speed, passages from Shakespeare, and as Adam in *As You Like It*, gives, with perfect intonation, the lines :

‘ Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty,
For in my youth, I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood,
Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo
The means of weakness and debility.
Therefore, my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly ! ’

So far, excellent ! So far, admirable ! So far, delightful ! The pupil receives compliments with

a heightened colour, and the teacher accepts congratulations with the air of one who has grappled with a herculean task and scored a conspicuous triumph. But encounter the gifted student outside the school gates (where he gives a shrill whoop of exultation at gaining temporary freedom from control), and listen as he engages in eager discussion with his fellows, and you have to be pretty sharp of ear and fairly keen of intellect to understand what on earth he is talking about. He says :

‘ Ine gowing ome keppe awers yet.’

Which, being translated, means that for at least two hours he does not intend to return to the house of his parents. He says :

‘ Les’ gime ketch !’

Which, similarly interpreted, means a recommendation that a game of ball should be started. The trouble of identifying his words is not in any way diminished if the youngster be the possessor of adenoids, and his mother refuses to allow the medical authorities to rob him of them. In this condition the letter ‘ m ’ becomes a ‘ b,’ the ‘ n ’ becomes a ‘ d,’ and he speaks of Bary Queed of Scots, and of a much depressed country in Europe as Gerbady.

The London accent is not restricted to the Metropolis. Some one, in a book published not long since, declared Cockney was the child of the Kentish accent, but I think it would be difficult to prove that it was born in wedlock. A professor, more cautious, recently alluded to ‘ Cockney, that noble blend of East Mercian, Kentish, and East Anglia.’ The soldiers who came to us from Australia brought an accent not to be distinguished from that of London excepting for the addition of

a slight drawl. The London speech is infectious. There is the story of the new wealthy man who, determined that his son and heir should acquire the tone of the higher aristocracy, sent him to an expensive boarding-school in a distant county where he was to remain for the period of the cure. A month later, the father was summoned to the establishment.

‘It ain’t took long, then,’ he remarked with exultation to the head-master. ‘And you can guarantee, can you, that the boy has entirely got rid of his ’orrible Cockney way of talking?’

‘No, sir,’ replied the head-master sadly. ‘No. That news I am not able to give. In truth, I sent for you to take him away, because he has made all the other boys talk in the manner of London!’

Provincial accents are continually being imported into London, but, for the most part, they do not long survive customs examination at the frontier. Exceptional cases are to be found, and in these instances identification is greatly helped. When, somewhere close to Paddington station, I hear a girl passenger saying to another:

‘And her ’s had her photo took, and hers come out quite gude lookin’!’

Then I know—although, of course, it is no concern of mine—that the young woman hails from Devonshire. If, in Borough High Street, I hear men discussing the Prime Minister, and one says, in a measured way:

‘I doan’t think no warse of him than what he ’s been thought warse of!’

Then I am aware (without putting curious inquiries) that the impartial and cautious thinker

comes from Kent. If, at a London dairy, I hear the young proprietor giving an account of an argument with a friend encountered at the bootmaker's :

' I said to him, " You are not going to wear those great heavy boots in playing against us at the football match to-morrow, look you ? "

' " Yes, yes," he said.

' " No, no," I said.

' " Yes, yes," he said.

' " No, no," I said.

' " Yes, yes," he said.

' " Well, well ! " I said.'

Then I can guess at the principality in which he spent the years before migrating to secure a fortune in the capital.

And you and I are aware that a peculiarity in accent is not restricted to the insufficiently educated. Public schools often have an accent of their own. They exercise the right to assault and maltreat the King's English. The late Bishop of Carlisle, who had the trick of pronouncing ' o ' like ' u '—" I am fund of hut cuffee"—was giving advice at a working girls' club ; he impressed on the members the necessity for arranging full occupation of their spare time.

' Above all, girls,' he said earnestly, ' try, by all the means available, to cultivate a hubby ! '

The accent of the Londoner has to be watched carefully ; turn your back for a few years, and you discover he has introduced a change of method and a new set of phrases. Thackeray tells us of a people who said ' obleeged ' and ' feller,' and spoke a French of their own ; Dickens writes of a time when the Londoner said ' vinder ' for

'window,' 'winegar' for 'vinegar,' and the elder Weller had to instruct Mr. Justice Stareleigh how to write his name. Little Londoners at the present time cannot manage their 'th's,' or do not try, and they say 'muvver' and 'farver' and 'suffing'; I know middle class people who, having progressed in the world, complete their refinements of speech with the exception of one word which apparently defies them. 'Run upstairs, Dorothy, and fetch my handkercher'—or the second month of the year, which they cannot call by any other name but 'Febuary,' and this despite their own efforts and alternate encouragement and reproof from their offspring.

The current trend of the London accent is to turn the 'a' into 'i' (as in newspaper), the final letter 'w' into 'r' (as in borror), the letter 'h' into nothing at all (as in 'Igh 'Olborn). Sometimes the flavour is little more than the suggestion of garlic in a French salad; at moments of excitement it becomes more pronounced, and you can then almost tell the road in which the speaker lived his early days; you can guess at the number of the house.

The treatment of the aspirate is the leading characteristic of the London accent.

There used to be a fashion with the American journals—before their writers came to know us—of representing the Londoner not only as dropping the aspirate, but of using it in front of every word beginning with a vowel.

'Hi ham han Henglishman, hand Hi hain't hashamed hof hit!'

We never, as a fact, wasted our precious breath to this extent. Being rather pressed for time, we did

agree that the eighth letter of the English alphabet was not always worth troubling about. But the superfluous aspirate is a luxury of country folk rather than the Londoner. The Londoner will occasionally take it up and use it remorselessly when speaking to any one of a higher station in life, and it is intended then to hint, without making an affidavit to the effect, that he, too, has not escaped a University training. Here is what is called the emphatic energy of pronunciation. In a general way, he is on the side of abstinence rather than that of excess. And looked at squarely, you know, and with impartiality it is much easier to say :

'The 'orn of the 'unter is 'eard on the 'ill !'

or :

'Ammer, 'ammer, 'ammer on the 'ard 'igh road !'

than to invest these words with the aspirates favoured by convention, and prejudice, and head-masters. Also the Londoner can argue that he has but to cross the English Channel to find, in France, a country entirely free from despotism in this respect. I am told that the late ex-Empress Eugénie, during all her fifty years of residence here, never, in speaking English, paid any attention to the rules concerning the letter 'h'.

One of the forms of locution adopted by the Cockney has, of late, involved the use of a multitude of negatives. The system began, I think, with the comment of 'Not half !' used as a phrase of emphatic and cordial agreement, and from this it has gone on until now you sometimes in a remark cannot see the wood for the trees. 'Not half' means the whole or more. This to the foreigner

must be staggering ; it is confusing to most people. Not long since, a Fleet Surgeon, in a magazine article on the British seaman and his ways, wrote that, at the end of boxing contests, it was usual for the winner to say to the vanquished :

‘ You weren’t half in training, sonny ! ’

The Fleet Surgeon mentioned that this was said to console the beaten man. I expect the remark was made by the beaten man, and it, of course, meant not what was said, but the exact opposite. To say ‘ You weren’t half in training ’ is to say ‘ You were undoubtedly in excellent training.’ A Somers Town youngster offered me once this sentence :

‘ I ain’t been to the Zoo, I ain’t, not never since that time you took a party of us, and I wasn’t able to go, I didn’t ! ’

This is the kind of statement that requires patient, thoughtful, and determined unravelling.

Eccentricity in speech received great additions in the war, because circumstances demanded the words of stimulation, or reproof. It is mentioned of Herbert Spencer that he used an oath but once in his life, and that was when his fishing-line got in a tangle ; the lapse was regrettable, but not perhaps without excuse. He belonged to the spacious days when elaboration and a certain heaviness were cultivated. Walter Crane once told me of a friend of his, engaged in Whitehall, whose conversational methods erred, if anything, on the side of profundity. Walter Crane and he met a young relative, a Navy officer.

‘ Well, sir,’ said the youth breezily, ‘ how goes it with you ? ’

‘ I have been trying,’ said the Whitehall man, ‘ to keep the worlds of passion and reason distinct, as it were, from any influence of what may be termed, in the absence of a better phrase, this sublunary sphere.’

‘ Rattling good idea,’ said the Navy youth. ‘ Half inclined to go on the same tack myself ! ’

Those days are past, and we talk now in a short, ejaculatory manner, and the words used are chosen for their intensity in expression.

The younger Pitt said he always thought that what little command of language he had came from a practice of reading, after tea, some passage of Livy or of Cicero. The Londoner takes no pains of this kind, either after tea or at any other period of the day ; his command of language is acquired without the study that Pitt imposed on himself. The Londoner makes small effort to increase his vocabulary, but if new words float his way, he will sometimes draw them in casually and add to his stock.

I once knew a railway porter, working at Cannon Street station, living at Spa Road. He was a talkative chap, and only after knowing him for a long period did I discover that he was, at the same time, a man of few words. I took note of the various words he used, and in the space of a month the total had not gone beyond ninety. In this number repetitions did not count, and repetitions were his strong quality. It was said of him that he never saw a train arrive and discharge its passengers without remarking, with an air of great perplexity :

‘ Makes you wonder where all the people come from ! ’

And the average Londoner is, in a like way, prone to depend on well-trained and considerably used phrases that save him from turmoil of the brain or the exercise of invention.

The question of accent is one of sheer prejudice. I like the Cockney accent, but I am not sure I can explain why I like it; the point clear is that the Londoner has a right to an accent of his own. The general view is that an accent is something which belongs to other people. Most of the well-to-do folk in town talk with a Scots or a north country accent; many of the pleasantest have an Irish accent; I am told that, in the House of Commons, ambitious politicians at one time cultivated the gently rising intonation of Wales. The queer detail about the Cockney accent is that so many of us have it without knowing that we have it.

A school manager of my acquaintance who is in this condition once intervened in a geography lesson.

‘You have to be very careful, boys,’ he said, ‘in regard to the meaning of words that have an exactly sim’lar sound. For instance, the spine is what most of us wear down the middle of our backs. But Spine, the country in Europe what your teacher has been telling you about—that is a diff’rent affair altogether!’

Now and again, the aristocrats borrow the accent of the hard-up folk. Some years since they dropped the final ‘g’ in words; Bethnal Green had, long before, anticipated them. Just now, there is little to distinguish the pronunciation of the word ‘girl’ as given in Berkeley Square, West, and in Jamaica Road, Bermondsey.

You discover a variation of speech in the different quarters of town. South of the river it is slow, and inclined to a note of dejection.

I mentioned this once in print somewhere, and I had a long letter which contained a suggestion of the cause. The writer pointed out that folk in the north of London went to their daily tasks facing the morning sun, and became thereby exhilarated and alert in manner, and, consequently, in speech ; those from the south of the town had the sun at their backs, and were not subject to the same enlivening influences. There may be something in the contention. Most of us are acquainted with houses surrounded, hemmed in, and oppressed by trees (with the melancholy cypress as first favourite), and the brightest and most animated visitor to those houses comes under the shadow, and his voice takes the accent of regret ; he finds himself saying that Great Britain is on the down grade ; that he is compelled to travel on the worst managed railway in the United Kingdom ; that he fears, or hopes, he is not long for this world. To him, life protracted is protracted woe. Items on the agenda for discussion in the sun-deprived house include fatal accidents, monetary losses, and disinclination to sing on the part of the canary. The talk meanders, goes sluggishly, and the least obstacle dams it entirely.

Anyway, the manner of London speech south of the river is leisurely, and taken as though talking were one of the immense difficulties mankind is called upon to grapple with ; the effort of remembering names is too much for the people, and they call neighbours by the title of Mr. Thing-me-bob, or

Mrs. Wha's name. In Walworth and Lambeth the relation of an incident spares nothing in the way of meticulous detail.

‘ So I ses to her, I ses, I ses——’

‘ And she turns round, she does, and she ses to me, she ses, she ses——’

They have the space there in which to quarrel luxuriously and at generous length with folk residing next door or over the way. (It has been pointed out that, in connection with acquaintances over the way, agreement between the two parties can scarcely be expected, seeing that they are arguing from opposite premises.) At the river-side, the district is generally in the grip of financial anxiety, and those responsible for bringing up a family come to talk, even on cheerful subjects, in a lachrymose, indolent, self-sympathetic way which is a habit and a custom.

But north of the river, in (say) Shoreditch, Kentish Town, Chalk Farm, the dialect is crisp, and in speech great attention paid to economy, with every word clipped, so that the people seem to be using a telegraphic code, where everything depends on brevity. If, for any reason, you wish to make yourself acquainted with the latest slang words, try Notting Dale. Notting Dale is, geographically speaking, a piece of hard-up land surrounded by wealth, and it says, and it does, just as it pleases. In Notting Dale you will hear rhyming slang. Rhyming slang is a cryptic form of speech by which if you want to refer to Grenadier Guards, you call them the Strand, because Grenadier Guards suggests a band, and band rhymes with Strand. Rhyming slang has many intricacies, and one has need to

belong to the elect to follow any conversation based on its principles. Where the Londoner has occasion to make frequent announcement of the same word, a slurring and a distortion are bound to happen. I knew a bus conductor who became engaged to a young woman, his superior in intellect, and in taking the journeys necessary for the cultivating of affectionate discussions, she, from the seat just inside the door, criticised with severity his pronunciation of the word Highgate. Much impressed by this, he did on the next day give the word in its most correct form :

‘ High-gate ! High-gate ! ’ with good voice production and fine elocutionary ability. And passengers came to the omnibus steps and said :

‘ Young man ! Does this bus go to Igit ? ’

Similarly, it is useful to learn the conductor’s procedure, and to understand that the Elephant is not the Elephant but the Cawsel, that the terminus of the Great Eastern is Pool Street. You and I, in like conditions, would adopt identical methods of pronunciation. Above all, in travelling about London, do please throw away all predilections in favour of abstemiousness, and make yourself acquainted with public-houses. Half the battle is won by an explorer of town if he be acquainted with the York and Albany, the Palmerston, the Marquis of Granby, the White Horse, the Nag’s Head. This, believe me, is more helpful, in consulting an omnibus official, or arguing with a taxi-cab driver, than a knowledge of churches, polytechnics, or Scotch wool shops. Precision in speech is not always the monopoly of the stranger. There is a borough in

London called, by people who do not live in it, by the name of South'ark ; the residents call it South-wark. More than once I have been told by folk that they were born at Green-wich. There is a thoroughfare in Shoreditch called Curtain Road. ' I knew it,' said an old lady, ' I knew Cur-tain Road when of an evening it used to be simply packed. Took you howers to get through it. But now, bless your 'eart, Cur-tain Road isn't what Cur-tain Road was. Why, even on a Saturday night you can walk down Cur-tain Road now with impunity ! '

I hope I may enter a plea for toleration in regard to the writing down of the London, or indeed any other, accent. Any laborious attempt to reproduce it exactly in the printed page can result only in bewilderment. The best that can be done is to give the form of the talk, to hint at the accent, and, for the rest, to trust to the intelligence of the reader. In the same way, it is not convenient—much as one sometimes desires to convey truth—to give the precise adjectives and nouns which have a place in the ordinary conversation of the Londoner ; it is fair to say that in this respect we are hopelessly out-classed by towns of the Midlands and of the North. Extravagance in speech remains in London, for the most part, amongst folk who are disgruntled through want of exercise, and become livery—four-wheeled-cab drivers, for instance.

There are probably many who look on the Cockney accent with genuine disapproval, and they are, likely enough, doing all they can to exterminate it. Of these, as I have hinted, I am not one. The speech of folk stimulates observations ; it often provides a clue that would otherwise be absent ; it furnishes a

welcome note of individuality. Kept within reasonable bounds, the Cockney accent is a signal that the owner belongs to a great and a good-humoured town ; one that many of us can never regard without pride and real affection.

IN the early years of my City life I found myself called on to give evidence in a case brought by Schenker & Co., forwarding agents. It was heard by Mr. Justice Bowen, and the affair might have gone from my memory but that the *Times* report mentioned that his lordship alluded to me as an exceptionally intelligent witness. This happened to be my first press notice, and it has, accordingly, been treasured. William Willis, Q.C., appeared for my people, and he told them my evidence turned the case in their favour; I hope this statement had less of eccentricity than some which came from him. He was a Baptist, and a teetotaller; he lived near Lee Green, and always chattered to every passenger in the little omnibus which ran from Blackheath.

‘You won’t forget, conductor,’ said Willis one night, breaking off in the persistent conversation, ‘to put me down at the Tiger’s Head.’

‘Oh, my good man,’ said a perturbed-looking woman to the eminent lawyer and strict Non-conformist, ‘don’t you really think you have had quite enough already?’

At Cannon Street station in the morning he used to hand over his newspaper to the ticket-collector, with a remark given without a semi-colon or comma.

‘Capital weather dear friend for the young

lettuces you believe in the Lord I hope what wages are you getting now ? ’

Some one condoled with him when the news came that he had been returned by an Essex constituency by a majority of two votes only.

‘ One would have been ample,’ said Willis. As a fact, there were recounts over the election, and furious disputes—all of which he must have relished to the full—and the majority did eventually stand as one. I never listened to any other barrister who had such a fiery, vehement style, or one so well able to convey to the jury the impression that a verdict against his clients would be little short of a scandal and an infamy, placing the jury for all time outside the ring of civilisation.

A big watch robbery necessitated for me a journey to Switzerland in the company of our solicitor, in order to collect witnesses for identification of the goods. Mr. Geoghegan, an eloquent Irishman, defended the two prisoners at Clerkenwell Sessions, and after the verdict made an appeal for clemency ; he announced that the only child of one of the men had just died. The man in the dock—his name was Lee—slapped his forehead with a gesture of self-reproach ; he nodded on being told that he would go away for five years ; he broke down completely on hearing that his home in Huntingdon Street, Hoxton, would be sold up to pay the costs of the prosecution.

In regard to another case, a large theft of silk, I went with our legal man to Lyons and Grenoble ; the affair closed one chapter with a severe punishment to the men concerned ; it opened another,

because a prisoner asserted that the detectives, or some of them, had kept possession of a part of the stolen goods. One of the detectives, not affected by this charge, gave me, from personal knowledge, details of the remote Wainwright case.

H. B. Irving, the actor, begged me one afternoon, some twenty years later, to accompany him to Whitechapel ; he had to write a preface to an account of the Wainwright trial, and he did not know the neighbourhood. A friendly hay and straw dealer in Whitechapel Road showed us the outhouse at the back where the body of the woman stayed for a year ; in a dramatic way he reconstituted the circumstances, and enacted the tragedy. As Henry Wainwright, he carried the two heavy bundles along to the roadway ; a four-wheeler, he said, stood by the kerb. Still as Henry Wainwright, he lighted a strong cigar. Now playing Stokes, a young fellow-workman of Henry Wainwright's, he conveyed the impression that suspicions were aroused ; Stokes inspected one of the bundles, and (but this was left by the hay and straw dealer to our imagination) set out on the hot summer afternoon at a run, following the cab closely over London Bridge until it pulled up at the Hen and Chickens at the top of Borough High Street, kept by Thomas George Wainwright, an ironmonger. There, by fortune, a policeman chanced to be waiting, and Stokes, in a breathless manner, communicated his news. Henry Wainwright and his brother Thomas were arrested, and charged with being concerned in the murder of one Harriet Lane. At the trial, counsel for the defence endeavoured to argue that there was nothing

inconsistent with suicide. The Lord Chief-Justice said drily :

‘ I shall make the remark to the jury that a person who commits suicide does not bury herself.’

Thomas Wainwright received a sentence of five years’ penal servitude. Henry was hanged. Stokes was rewarded with thirty pounds.

On the premises that once served the Hen and Chickens, H. B. and I were shown, in a downstairs room, a space in the wall filled by the safe belonging to the estate agents who were then tenants of the building. This space had been prepared for the bundles conveyed from Whitechapel Road.

The Leman Street detective, referred to in the silk case, had become a night watchman on the Great Eastern Railway, and he was able to furnish us with the address of Stokes. Stokes showed great readiness to talk of this one particular and notable incident that had occurred forty years earlier.

At the request of the *St. James’s Gazette*, I made a tour of the London police courts, and wrote a descriptive sketch of a morning at each ; I see I hinted that Mr. Newton of Marlborough Street was the only magistrate who failed to show patience towards witnesses, or consideration to the other parties. Newton had an irritable trick of fussing with a pencil case ; he had a barking manner of speech. This was the kind of thing that happened :

MR. NEWTON (to agitated witness). Don’t be a silly foolish girl, but answer the question. Don’t be stupid, do you hear ?

COUNSEL. Please don’t frighten my witness, sir. She is giving her evidence very well.

MR. NEWTON. I think she is an idiot.

COUNSEL. Your worship may think that ; you should not say it.

MR. NEWTON. I shall say it, sir, and that is a highly improper remark for you to make.

The others, all of a better type, were Mr. Bushby at Worship Street, Mr. Sheil, with an engaging Irish accent, at Westminster, Sir John Bridge, suavity itself, at Bow Street. It looks no easy task, this business of giving decisions, but in a general way it is performed without agitation or undue ceremony. I am told that a stipendiary magistrate, so deaf that he could not hear at three yards, was once appointed ; he held the job for ten years, and it is assumed that he never heard a word of evidence or a phrase in the argument ; his decisions were invariably sound, shrewd, and reasonable. There is a passage in one of Anatole France's novels, *Les Dieux ont Soifs*, which furnishes a reminder. The young hero is anxious for instruction concerning his duties on the Revolutionary Tribunal, and an old gentleman gives him this advice : to listen carefully to the evidence for and against the prisoner, to take due note of the particulars, to submit all this to his own judgment, and then to send a coin into the air, and let that decide.

At lunch at the Mansion House, I sat next to a cheery, rubicund Alderman of the old type (the new men are slim, and devoted to physical exercise), and I mentioned a resolve long since taken. It was that, in view of the benevolence shown towards crime in the small Justice Room of the building, I should make my first essay, if any, in breaking the law somewhere within the neighbouring area.

‘ I can tell you how that comes about,’ he said. ‘ I arrive here on a cold, rainy morning, and I say to myself that scamps who are responsible for bringing me away from my place of business shall most certainly get it in the neck. Just where Nelly wears her beads. Full limit of the punishment allowed. And then, before going in, one of the attendants brings me a tumbler of hot milk, with a very nice tot of fine old brandy in it, and—well, you can guess what happens. I glance at the first unlucky beggar who steps up into the dock, and he looks hungry, and where he has a vacuum, so to speak, I ’ve got a nice, warm, comfortable feeling, and, of course, I let him off. Who wouldn’t, eh ? ’

The old Old Bailey was a gloomy place, and all the officials went about it with a dejected air. The lighting of the courts was ineffective ; ventilation scarcely existed, and only the extremely wide-awake of lookers-on could prevent themselves from giving in to the attractions of sleep.

To enter Newgate, you went up four steps to a narrow door with two rows of iron teeth at the top. You pulled a bell. In the entrance hall was a desk, with a gas-jet burning near ; a high-backed chair with green cushions. As you went along, each door was locked behind you ; the consulting room (for solicitors) was at the end of the passage, and the interview room. A whipping-post and birch were at hand, and you were shown handcuffs and heavy ankle chains ; and the axe made for the Cato Street conspirators. In the chapel, you noticed a grill on one side for the concealment of women prisoners ; the inscription overhead was ‘ Dieu et mon Droit.’

In the burying passage, where the bodies of the hanged, set in lime, were put away, there stood initials on the wall.

‘That,’ said the warder, pointing, ‘is Milsom and Fowler, and that’s Fougerson, and that’s Mrs. Dyer, and that’s the Flowery pirates, and——’

In the condemned cell was the notice, ‘God will Supply.’ A friend of mine acted, at the period, as doctor at Holloway Prison, and it was his duty to look after the health of any one convicted to hang. It always struck me as gruesome that he should have to hurry away from a meal because of a summons in regard to a condemned man, leaving this world on the following Monday morning, but demanding attention on account of a slight sore throat.

By the good nature of Aldermen and Under Sheriffs, I have heard many interesting cases, although I rarely feel a desire to watch those that excite a special interest. I prefer to listen to the ordinary crimes of ordinary criminals. By the merest chance, I once saw in the dock a man who in my boyhood days had been a rather magnificent gentleman farmer in the Kentish village where I lived; he had given up agriculture, and had taken to the writing of begging letters. By chance, too, I found myself listening to the trial of a London doctor who, for years, had been a neighbour of mine. For the rest, it is illuminating for a novelist to be able to sit in court and to see the characters pass before him; to observe how folk do really behave in the presence of a great crisis, and, above all, to see the pains taken by the English law to make certain that justice is done. One of the privileges

of the two Sheriffs of the City of London is to provide lunch during the sittings at the Central Criminal Court, and in the long room you meet the judges engaged in the various courts, the barristers associated with the cases, and the permanent officials. (I did once see at the lunch a prosecutor in an unfinished trial, but this I imagine must have been an error on the part of somebody.)

A man remarked once, in a club, that legal folk were the dullest folk to talk to in all this wide and thickly populated town of London.

‘Have you ever tried listening?’ asked a more impartial neighbour.

I have always been ready to listen to barristers in their off-duty hours, and I have ever found them ready to give of their best. Their training, and the continual mental exercise, help a quickness in retort. (It was a legal member of the House of Commons who, following a querulous address delivered by some one whose features had an exceptional resemblance to those owned by apish ancestors, said of it that it was an exhibition of gorilla warfare.) Lord Alverstone, during our acquaintance with each other, rarely failed to bring an anecdote for exchange; Lord Mersey has as keen a sense of humour as any one need possess. The specimens of Lord Carson’s mordant wit are too well known to be quoted here. Days in the courts would be monotonous if a lighter touch were not introduced now and again; at times a witness makes unknowingly a contribution.

‘Art,’ an expert said once in the witness-box, over a civil case affecting the value of pictures, ‘art

has no country. Art is not restricted to Great Britain. Art, if I may venture to say so, my lord, is metropolitan ! ’

Sir Douglas Straight told me of a piece of legal oratory given in a case heard before Mr. Commissioner Kerr.

‘ Gentlemen of the jury, bear this in mind. The reputation of a cheesemonger in the City of London is like the bloom upon the peach ; touch it, and it is gone ! ’

I have never been able to decide, in my own mind, whether or not humour on the bench is desirable or excusable. I suppose it is likely to be shown only by the judge or the magistrate, as the case may be ; every one else is too deeply interested to trouble about joking. Mr. Plowden did it well, and Sir Charles Darling rarely fails to score, but, done with anything short of perfection, bench humour is calculated to depress. Plowden told me once of a joke he had overlooked. He mentioned to a woman at dinner that he had written a book called *Grains of Chaff*.

‘ I see,’ she said readily. ‘ Picked up by the beak.’ Plowden could not understand why he had missed this obvious sub-title.

Sir Charles Darling presided at a case which the Society of Authors brought on my account against the *English Illustrated Magazine*. The magazine had enjoyed good days under the editorship of Comyns Carr and his successors ; but those days were past, and it had, for some while, been run on economical lines. I received from a press cutting agency pages extracted from the magazine—the date July of ’12, and the frontispiece an appropriate drawing called ‘ Innocence ’—containing a story

entitled 'A Man who had a Conscience,' by W. Pett Ridge. I had not, in fact, written it, and as the editor declined to make an apology or give an explanation, proceedings were taken.

In the King's Bench Division. For the plaintiff, Mr. Henry F. Dickens, K.C., and Mr. Gutteridge (instructed by Field Roscoe & Co.); for the defendants, Mr. Haldinstein, K.C., and Mr. Guisburg (instructed by Charles Anderson & Co.).

Mr. Dickens said that his client was a distinguished author, and had been writing for the last twenty years. Those of the jury who had read his *Mord Em'ly*, *A Breaker of Laws*, and *Splendid Brother* would know well the kind of work he had done. He had a style of his own, and in his writings dealt to a great extent with the lives of the poorer classes. The story under consideration was calculated to do Mr. Pett Ridge considerable injury. It transpired that the writer agreed to accept two guineas for it, whereas, as a matter of fact, Mr. Pett Ridge would get at least twenty guineas for a story of this length. He did not want to decry the article, which was obviously a very amateur work, but the worst of it was that it aped the style of Mr. Pett Ridge, and dealt with the kind of subject which he dealt with.

The attitude assumed by defendants was inexplicable, having regard to the fact that they were told over and over again that this story was not written by Mr. Pett Ridge. No doubt they knew who the real author of it was now. It was certainly not Mr. Pett Ridge, nor was it now suggested that the writer's real name was Pett Ridge, or anything like it. A disclaimer appeared in a newspaper,

and the writer of the story himself wrote to defendants :

‘ I much regret the story in the name of Wilfred Pett Ridge should have been confused with that of another author of the same name.’

His lordship asked the name of the writer of the story.

MR. DICKENS. He is an assistant to a grocer in Bournemouth, and his name is Gubbins. (Laughter.)

HIS LORDSHIP. He is inscribed on the roll of fame now ; he may give up grocering. (Laughter.)

Mr. Dickens said that the letter continued :

‘ In order that this foolish blunder may not occur again, I will adopt another nom de plume.

‘ I wish to express my profound regret to you and to Mr. Pett Ridge for the annoyance he has been caused, and desire that the mistake should be righted with him.’

Therefore, added counsel, on 15th August defendants knew definitely that Mr. Pett Ridge had not written this story.

HIS LORDSHIP. Was there not some one who wrote in the name of Boz, and who was not Boz ?

Counsel said that other correspondence followed, but no satisfactory arrangement could be come to, with the result that those proceedings were instituted.

After I had given evidence—defendant’s counsel was evidently disturbed to find that mine was not a pen-name, as he had expected—witnesses were called.

Mr. J. B. Pinker, literary agent, expressed the opinion that this was a bad story, and a bad story had a bad effect on an author’s reputation.

Mr. Jerome K. Jerome, the author, said he started

The Idler and *To-Day*. They were both dead since he left them. (Laughter.) He thought a great deal of Mr. Pett Ridge's work. It was almost unique. Nobody could touch him in his particular line. The story under consideration was very poor in style, and had no humour. To put it forward as by Mr. Pett Ridge was like an amateur artist going about and calling himself J. S. Sargent.

On his attention being called to the fact that two guineas was accepted for the story, witness replied that there was an awful lot of sweating in literature. Editors watched writers as solicitors watched barristers, and as picture dealers watched artists.

HIS LORDSHIP. It is perfectly notorious that big firms of solicitors only watch barristers who have already risen. (Laughter.)

WITNESS. Sometimes they marry the attorney's daughter. (Laughter.) If I had been an editor I would have said, after reading this story, 'I am awfully sorry; he is evidently going down.' Commissions for authors are arranged for four or five years ahead, and the price of an author's work is fixed upon the class of work he is doing at present. No editor is going to throw money away upon a man who looks as if he were going to pieces.

Cross-examined by Mr. Haldinstein, witness said that if Mr. Pett Ridge had had softening of the brain, he might have written this story, and people did have softening of the brain. (Laughter.)

Mr. Barry Pain, author, said he agreed with Mr. Jerome as to the reputation of Mr. Pett Ridge as an author. This story was quite a contemptible work. There was nothing artistic about it—no humour, no definite character—and it was not written with

Mr. Pett Ridge's careful observation of real life. It might affect his reputation as an author in more ways than one. He thought a reader who picked up the magazine would say, 'Pett Ridge has gone all to pieces; it is no good getting his next book from the library, or magazine with his name on it.'

Mr. Edgar Jepson, author, gave similar evidence as to Mr. Pett Ridge's reputation, and observed that any one reading this story would not read another by the author until he had forgotten all about it.

MR. HALDINSTEIN (cross-examining). If the reader had thought the author had gone off his head, he would want to read another to see if he had recovered?

WITNESS. Not unless he himself had gone off his head. (Laughter.)

In summing up, his lordship made no pretence to conceal erudition, and he talked at large of Keats. 'As to the conduct of Gubbins, of course it was not right, but they knew that Bacon was supposed to have written stuff as Shakespeare, and there was the case of Chatterton, who was now considered one of the heroes of English literature. Perhaps some day Mr. Gubbins would be considered one of these heroes.' Despite all this, the jury took but fifteen minutes to consider, and returned a verdict in my favour for £150. It should be mentioned that the story was childish beyond all the reasonable limits of childishness, and this, with the editor's obstinate refusal to apologise, provided excuse for bringing the action; it can be mentioned for the benefit of those about to take legal proceedings that the owner of the magazine went into bankruptcy, and the liquidator eventually sent £7, 4s. 4d., 'being the

first and final dividend of $5\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the pound on your claim of £329, 18s. in this matter.' Also, it can be remarked that the ambitious young man at Bournemouth had previously sent in a story of India under the name of Flora Annie Steel ; the editor, being intelligent, noted that the address was not Mrs. Steel's, and that the story was preposterous, and he sent the manuscript to her, with the result that Gubbins had a severe warning which he did not heed for long. He wrote, after the hearing of the case, to a London journal pointing out that the name of Gubbins appeared in one of Baring Gould's novels, of whose ancestors it was said, ' Caesar never yet subdued.' Mr. Gubbins's pride in his own name did not stop him from borrowing the names of other people.

I find at Pentonville, where I am, in the description of the Home Office, one of the Voluntary Visitors, that a main grievance of prisoners is in regard to the action of the Crimes Act. A man who has twice been sentenced, say for housebreaking, comes under the Crimes Act, and he can be arrested whenever his procedure is held by constables or detectives to justify the step.

' Consequently,' they tell me, ' you can't stop to look at a shop window ; you can't sit down in the park ; you can't join a crowd to go to a music-hall. At any moment they may come along and nab you ! ' I have seen the present Recorder, Sir Ernest Wild, decline to send men on this charge again to prison. Certainly it is one of the few habits of the law which cause men to speak resentfully.

As to the change in prison life, I was years ago

shown the treadmill in a penal establishment, and I can recognise the changes in the way of tolerance and consideration that have been made. The Borstal system, in itself, is a good proof of the new methods adopted by the Home Office ; very often the Borstal places have little resemblance to prison institutions. At Feltham, for example, there are no walls to the grounds, and any lad who wishes to escape can do so with very little inconvenience ; he rarely decides to make the attempt. Even at Pentonville, and Wandsworth, and Wormwood Scrubs, where the maturer criminal is housed, there is a freedom that would have shocked the officials I used to meet in the 'eighties. A warder of experience put the matter to me very clearly.

' In the old days,' he said, ' we got into trouble if we spoke to a man as though he was a man. Now we get told off if we speak to him as though he wasn't a man.'

And there are Sunday concerts, and, for reading, interesting fiction, and a prisoner is induced to believe that the world is not altogether unkind ; he is led to think that the world is indeed far too good a place to be lost sight of even for six months.

A man was leaving prison after serving his time, and the assistant chaplain gave him a word of final advice. To remember the counsel already given, to bear in mind the sermons he had heard, to determine not to return.

' Sir,' said the departing man, with emotion, ' no one who has 'eard you preach would ever want to come back 'ere again ! '

I think the most diverting Londoner I ever met was a little, spare, middle-aged man who came

to the Howard Association for a loan ; he required a sovereign in order to purchase a barrow. (He became a coster in Pitfield Street, where he still suffers from lack of capital ; he tells me he borrows a pound from a Jewish lady near on Friday mornings, and repays twenty-five shillings to her on Sunday.) He was quite frank about the situation.

‘ ’Urt me right wrist, I ’ave, and consequently I ’ve got to look out for another job. Twen’y-one year in prison, and now I ’ve ’urt me right wrist, and I ’ve got——’

I asked the little man once to describe to me the biggest affair he had ever been mixed up with ; he shook his head.

‘ No,’ he said definitely. ‘ Can’t tell you the biggest, because that would—what shall I say ?—would involve other people. Once you start involving other people, why then other people get involved. But what do you say to me pinching four watches out of one and the same gentleman ? ’

I expressed incredulity.

‘ The Poultry,’ he began, ‘ is, as you may or may not know, situated at the Mansion ’Ouse end of Cheapside. At five sharp each evening a rather portly, well-fed gent comes out of his office, starts to cross the roadway and, half-way, peeps up at a very likeable young woman, typewriting at a window. I meets him there, and I relieves him of his gold watch. I left him alone for a fortnight—it don’t do to ’urry these matters—and then I went there again. Five o’clock, portly gentleman, upward glance, and I took his second gold watch.

‘ I didn’t go down for some time,’ went on the little man, ‘ must have been busy elsewhere.

'Owever, five o'clock, bulky party, another gold watch. What do you make of that ?'

I said that I made the total three ; he had spoken of four.

' I got a fourth,' he said. ' I got a fourth, and it was a Waterbury, and I put it back !'

I WAS brought one day from the country to London by my mother, and—after a visit to the London Stereoscopic Company in Regent Street, where my head was held in an iron vice whilst I was being photographed, and we were urged to have three specimens coloured—we had to pay a call in Gordon Square. The cab was not allowed to pass the barrier guarding the entrance until the driver had explained that he wished to set us down at a house in the square. The shackles to quick transit were knocked off gradually ; I believe the last, across Doughty Street, disappeared in '93. Toll-gates between London and Brighton went out of fashion in '76. Five bridges over the Thames were, with great thoughtfulness, opened as free just before my London time.

Old styles change, in spite of the opposition aroused by any hint of an altering. Beerbohm Tree felt genuinely perturbed by the threatened introduction of tram-lines on the Embankment.

'It shall be kept sacred,' he declared, with emphasis. 'Sacred, my boy, for me and for you !' The cars run, and they have made a gloomy thoroughfare cheerful.

Similarly a London writer once asserted, in a desperate article, that 'the Strand must not be changed in my time.' The Strand has broadened, and further widenings are imminent ; they will be to the advantage of all whose business takes them



According to BERT THOMAS

By kind permission of 'Punch'

that way, and the London writer, defeated, is censoring plays in Stable Yard, St. James's Palace.

Arguments for removal have at times been, in a like manner, ignored. When the obstruction of Temple Bar was replaced in '80 by the Griffin at the centre of the roadway, certain newspapers screamed and kicked, declaring that it would have to go, and go at once. The Griffin is still there.

Of all the London streets which have disappeared, I seem to miss Bozier's Court the most acutely. Bozier's Court was opposite the Horse-Shoe, and led from Tottenham Court Road to Oxford Street ; it was supposed to be a short cut, but for me it never was a short cut because it contained such fascinating second-hand book shops. I have an idea it had not the furtive air cultivated by Holywell Street that went east from the foot of Drury Lane to St. Clement's Danes. (A fellow-clerk was lured by an engaging and rollicking title to purchase a book in Holywell Street. Finding the contents did not reach the stage of impropriety indicated, he took the volume back, and appealed, without any success, for a return of his money.) Holywell Street was a grubby place, and most of the shops were in the charge of Jewish ladies, who wore an expression of inclusive contempt. More to my taste was Newcastle Street, for there one discovered an entrance to the Globe Theatre ; the gallery entrance was in Wych Street, with the doors of the Opera Comique not far off. One Saturday night I, being surrounded by burlier people, found myself in the Globe, when my full intention had been to patronise the Opera Comique. The stalls of the Opera Comique were reached by a long and narrow passage ; I tremble even now to

think of what would have happened if flames had broken out. The Park Theatre in Camden Town was destroyed by fire; amongst those which vanished in a less dramatic way was the Duke's in High Holborn (pit and gallery entrance in Brownlow Street); the Folly in King William Street, Strand; the Grecian in Shepherdess Walk, off City Road; the Imperial in Tothill Street, Westminster; the Olympic in Drury Lane (gallery entrance in Maypole Alley); and the two Strand theatres just alluded to. On the river side of the Strand, streets have gone; Beaufort Buildings, for instance, is now represented by the approach to the Savoy Hotel, and Cecil Street and Salisbury Street have vanished. There was an old-fashioned shop near here which sold ball-room candles. 'For Brilliant Light, The Ozokerit. For Withstanding Draught, The Aerated. For Elegance, The Ladies' Boudoir.'

On the north side, going Holborn way, was a maze of grubby streets; I find it difficult to recall the exact particulars to my memory. Aldwych and Kingsway made a clearance of them, and you can take it that the present aspect is more attractive than the past. It is less agreeable to compare Kingsway, its magnificent buildings and its direct line, with Charing Cross Road, an earlier effort. Charing Cross Road, opened in '87, ought never to have been built; once built it ought to have been razed to the ground. It is inexcusable that a thoroughfare of such importance should be made up of quite useful but unattractive residential dwellings.

Bloomsbury has improved in many ways, and Gower Street—'Everything comes to an end in this world except Gower Street,' wrote the essayist

—Gower Street is recovering from the lethargy that once possessed it. Late at night, the impression of hawkers in Gower Street was that you, hurrying homewards, could not need anything but groundsel ; they addressed you as Captain at the start, and called you by some lesser title when you excused yourself from purchasing. There is a great vacancy to be filled north of the British Museum ; large hotels have been built east ; for the rest the change I notice most in Bloomsbury is the absence of the German band of my youth. The German band had a gusty, an explosive manner that could have resulted only from long practice ; it organised a kind of shock attack with trombone, bassoon, and all in full blast, and often the strategy was so effective that it went on but a few seconds ; inmates of boarding-houses appealed for mercy, and coins were sent out to induce the enemy to go on to the next street.

In public conveyances well away from the centre of town there was, in my early days, always some aged passenger who, sooner or later, made this proud announcement to his fellow-travellers :

‘ Rec’lect this part round about here, I do, when it was all market gardings ! ’

I must be careful to avoid this comment, but I have indeed looked on at astonishing recoveries in neighbourhoods. The south side of the river, Westminster Bridge to Waterloo, is beginning to lead a new and a better life ; the corner once occupied by Astley’s Amphitheatre took on respectability long ago. Oxford Street, west of Marshall & Snelgrove’s, I saw, with youthful eyes, as a

mixture of stately old residences and decaying shops ; the district has been born afresh. I am inclined to think the broadening at Hyde Park Corner, made by removing the Wellington statue and borrowing a piece of Green Park, was slightly overdone. All Londoners know how difficult it is to effect a crossing there ; I never envy the job of the constables who have to regulate the movement ; from Hamilton Place, cars and omnibuses wishful to go to Victoria have to cross three lines of traffic. Green Park has always been liable to marauding attacks. John Burns told me of a Cabinet discussion which took place when it was proposed to set up a statue there to King Edward ; it enabled him to coin one of those alliterative phrases for which he always had an affection.

“ Sir,” I said to the Prime Minister, “ if this is permitted, Green Park will be turned into nothing less than a macadamised mausoleum ! ”

In the 'eighties shopkeepers were bewailing the competition of the Stores ; the larger establishments had not then ventured into Brompton Road or Kensington, and the tradesmen of Her Majesty had their shops in Regent Street, Piccadilly, and Pall Mall. In Regent Street, the western side was not popular, and, in the same way, the south sides of Oxford Street and Piccadilly were reckoned unattractive. (Before my London time there was a confusing arrangement by which both of the circuses in Regent Street were called Regent Circus.) My mother, in paying shopping visits to town, always went direct to St. Paul's Churchyard.

Euston Road passed through an heroic and almost excessive process of enlargement between

St. Pancras Church and Gray's Inn Road ; at the Great Portland Street end it has been permitted to retain its narrowness and the air of an overcrowded cemetery. Marylebone Road has never been impetuous in effecting alterations, but the building of the Central Railway terminus aroused it, and the changes at Baker Street gave room to breathe.

I went to Paris first at a time when all the ravages of the Franco-Prussian war had not been set right ; at St. Cloud, for instance, ruins could be seen, and there were indications of the great siege in the Tuileries Gardens. Paris then was, all the same, much whiter and more engaging in appearance than London ; you returned and instituted comparisons that were not flattering to the metropolis. To-day it seems to me—and I am certain to others—that London is immeasurably cleaner and more jovial than Paris. Means of communication are better here. The pedestrian is not too safe in London, but in France's capital everything on wheels runs over him. The whip of the Paris driver used to be a dangerous arm of warfare ; this has been taken from him, but he is not dismayed, and his language, so far as I can follow it, has lost nothing of directness and pungency. Paris, in these days, has the suggestion of a professional lady who, having lost her make-up box, is disinclined to take the trouble of finding it. As to other competing towns on the Continent, I think of Berlin as it was, Petrograd as I knew it, Vienna in the days that were ; it makes one grateful that London has not gone their way.

The widening of Ludgate Hill and the broadening

of Fleet Street were matters that engaged public attention for years ere they were embarked upon, and indeed any alteration in the City proved so expensive that it had to be considered deeply. City journals thrived on the correspondence that was provoked. In one of them, a trenchant letter appeared in regard to the condition of a street going from Cannon Street towards the river. 'Again we ask,' the communication said at the end, 'who is responsible for the present intolerable state of Dowgate Hill? We are, dear Sir, yours faithfully——' The signatures of half a dozen firms were added. The City authorities not long since rebuilt Southwark Bridge, and traffic has decided to ignore it. From Cannon Street railway bridge you look eastward and see a thick line of conveyances going over London Bridge; looking west, you are able to count, without trouble, the few that patronise Southwark Bridge.

The City has made a brilliant advance with new buildings since the arrest caused by the war; you approach it from the south, and, starting with the Guardian Assurance and Lloyd's Bank offices that look down on and dwarf the statue of King William the Fourth, it matters little which direction you take; large, solid, and attractive buildings are encountered. They are in Eastcheap (the visitor to London should be taken at once to see the offices of the Port of London Authority), they are in Moor-gate Street, they are in Threadneedle Street. With the coming of all this new magnificence, some of the older houses have slipped away. Eating-houses have gone; I take it their patrons died, and younger folk decided not to go and sit in pews, and take a

heavy midday meal. Thus, recent years have seen the vanishing of a favourite in Baker's Alley, where customers at meals often wore their silk hats, and the tips to the various attendants were also precisely fixed. (I once saw Sir William Harcourt at a club go through lunch without removing his head-gear.) There were joints ; there were steaks and chops, and potatoes in jackets ; there was wine or beer. Now, heads of firms take a light meal in their office, or they run out to one of the establishments run by Lyons, and the Aerated Bread Company, where they snatch a cup of coffee and a poached egg on toast at a table which they may share with their own lift boy.

Something of romance left the City, and, in particular, the Newgate Street district, when Christ's Hospital removed in '03 to Horsham. The bare-headed, yellow-stockinged boys at play inside the railings gave a decorative note that nothing has replaced ; the only opportunity London has now of catching sight of them occurs during holiday time. A Bluecoat boy is never chaffed in town ; indeed, London seems to have resigned itself to all eccentricities in costume, and the wildest efforts of pioneers in this direction leave London cold and serene. The pigeons remain near St. Paul's, and they receive a meed of general attention that must be gratifying to any bird ; to obtain something like it, distinguished folk ere this have had to write letters to the public journals.

One change in the London streets is due to the introduction of petrol ; something is owing to the large increase of population. It is not easy to imagine what the congestion of traffic would have

been if the Tube railways had not been laid down. When I came to London, the first thing to do was to learn the colours of the respective omnibuses. The Favorite, going from Abney Park to Victoria, was green ; The Atlas, Camberwell Gate to St. John's Wood, also green ; The Royal Oak, red ; The Carlton, Kentish Town to Trafalgar Square, yellow ; The City Atlas, London Bridge to St. John's Wood, green. The longest drive, Richmond to Broad Street, white, and the fare for the journey was about as it is to-day. Affability was brought to its highest point in the deportment of passengers and drivers of the few remaining City omnibuses that pulled up near the European Tavern, at the corner of Prince's Street ; they met each morning, they exchanged views on the topics of the day, they saluted each other in leaving. I have a faint impression, connected with this, of a post-horn ; likely enough this belonged to a conveyance privately owned, and not one belonging to the General Omnibus Company.

As to the suburbs, it is not for want of knowledge that I abstain from describing them, but because the topic is unwieldy. At one time there was a disposition to use the word suburban as an expression of contempt ; I could never understand why. W. E. Henley's men rarely missed a chance of deriding the suburbs, and this was strange, for those I knew lived in the convenient districts. Middle age in the suburbs can be just as happy and as interesting as middle age anywhere ; youth in the suburbs, with playing fields near, is to be envied. The vastness of the suburbs can be guessed at if a journey be paid—

To Hither Green, S.E.
To Ilford, E.
To Palmers Green, N.
To Acton, W.

I have talked a good deal of the outer districts in novels and short stories ; it requires a bigger pen than mine to treat of them, and their constantly increasing extent, in the lump. London will be a mighty city indeed one of these days.

Lowther Arcade—it closed in '98—went from Adelaide Street to the Strand, and it was a kind of preparatory school for the Burlington. The stalls were filled with dolls and games, and sometimes now, as I go by Coutts's Bank of an evening, I fancy I hear the tinkling sounds of a musical box. It may be that, after office hours, the shades of the old stall-holders are permitted to return.

I OFFERED, at a drawing-room meeting held in the West End to interest folk in the youngsters of the minor neighbourhoods, the suggestion that there should be a mirth day every week for the children. These lines, with the initials M. S., followed in one of the journals, headed with an extract from the speech :

Let us hear them laughing daily,
Laughing lightly, laughing gaily,—
O their light laugh ringing clear !—
Be each day to them a mirth-day,
Prized and precious as the birthday
That is best of all the year.

Let the children's happy laughter
Ring to schoolroom beam and rafter,
Sound from every garden close ;
And from playgrounds, open spaces,
Sordid slum and public places
Float on every breeze that blows.

Youth is transient, and it stays not,
Envious, ageing Time delays not,
And with him come care and pain ;
Though old age may sit despairing,
Why should children, then, be caring ?
Let their laughter ring again.

Laugh, my little lads and lasses,
Soon the time for laughter passes—
Wherefore laugh, the while you may ;
All too soon will come the morrow
With its unimagined sorrow—
Laugh, my little ones, to-day.

I daresay any interest I took in London children started from the moment when, soon after I came up to town, I began to walk about in the evenings, south and east. My practice was to march until I was completely tired, and then take a conveyance for home. At that time, the appearance of the little ones in the streets did justify the alarming pictures set out on appeals submitted by benevolent organisation. (If this type of pamphlet reaches me to-day I drop it, without hesitation, into the basket that holds waste paper ; I recognise that it is an endeavour to trade on ignorance. My one grudge against an excellent organisation near Theobald's Road is that it keeps up the dismal title of Ragged School Union.)

London children cannot be overlooked ; they refuse to be overlooked, although so many folk are paid to overlook them. In many districts they own and control the streets, and it is a part of their duties to throw ridicule at magnificent maturity. Anything like ostentation excites their satire. Anything resembling patronage creates resentment. Anything that hints at self-assertiveness amuses them enormously. At our Somers Town branch of the Children's Happy Evenings Association, new helpers occasionally presented themselves at the schools, and at times these were tall, important young women from Mayfair way, admirably intentioned, and full of generous ideas. Set in charge of a room where they had to control and interest, say, forty youngsters they failed to do either, and within twenty minutes they were sending out S.O.S. calls for assistance. On the other hand, there came to us girls of unobtrusive deportment, who were engaged, perhaps, in the City or Whitehall by day, and these, with no

show of authority but simply by the aid of some mysterious quality, were at once able to take management ; they never asked for counsel or help, but just did the job, and at half-past seven went quietly home.

The Happy Evenings Association was started in '88 by Miss Ada Heather-Bigg, and her sister, Lady Bland-Sutton—wife of the clever and generous-hearted surgeon—was, during many energetic years, the honorary secretary. The supply of the voluntary and entirely unpaid helpers rarely failed ; when there occurred a temporary shortage, Lady Bland-Sutton and I went about recruiting, and we talked in London houses, we talked at suburban High Schools, we talked at Convent schools, we talked to audiences of every likely kind. Once a year there were competitions between the various centres, and the finals took place on an afternoon at the end of March ; amongst the judges were always Mrs. Kendal, Viscount Acheson, Mr. B. J. Angle, the boxing expert, and Mrs. Wordsworth, the dancing instructress. In '08, King Edward and Queen Alexandra came to the finals at Queen's Hall ; a message preceded them to the effect that their Majesties would be able to stay for half an hour only, and they remained for an hour and a half. This is a brief account of the proceedings :

' The programme began with a march past of 337 children from fourteen London schools. Two thousand other children in the galleries sang " The Children's Song," by Rudyard Kipling, as the boys and girls on the floor of the hall were curtsying and saluting their Majesties. Nursery rhyme quadrilles were danced by Finsbury children, and there were bar-bell exercises by Hoxton boys. The

old English game of "Looby Loo" was played by children from the Westminster Cathedral School, and Battersea boys followed with figure marching. The Prince of Wales's Feather March was done by girls from Marylebone; there was ball drill by Stepney little ones. Ten girls from the Cambridge House, Camberwell, by special command of the Queen, performed the action song "Bogies," and made a pretty show dressed in long white robes. Some capital skipping was done by Fulham girls, the "pepper" at the end evoking the cheers of the young spectators. During the displays General Sir Bindon Blood, Mr. R. A. Robinson, Mr. Cyril Jackson, Mr. Pett Ridge, and Miss Olga Hentschel (by the last of whom the sketches in the programme were specially designed) were presented to their Majesties. Before leaving, the King and Queen were shown some of the work, such as painting, toy-making, and chip-carving, done in the "Quiet Rooms" on an ordinary "Happy Evening." Their Majesties were particularly pleased with the performance, and frequently applauded the children as they danced.'

The annual meeting of the Association invariably took place at 19 Arlington Street; at the first I went to, the speakers were Redvers Buller and Cyril Maude.

It was sometimes hard work to run a centre, but always jolly work, and few of us were without acute regret when, owing to the outbreak of war in '14, the consequent diversion of voluntary workers to more important activities, and owing to air raids, the Association had to suspend activities. In '19 there was a meeting at Bath House to consider new conditions which had arisen, and this resolution was adopted: 'In view of the fact that the work of the

Children's Happy Evenings Association, the pioneer organisation for amusing children, is now being carried on and subsidised by the Educational Authorities, this Council is of opinion that it is no longer necessary to continue the voluntary work of the Association.' It can be mentioned that in all the thirty years no expense was put upon the ratepayer; indeed, at the close, a sum of money was handed over to the London County Council, together with the banners given, for competition, by the Queen.

I need not labour the value of early training. When John Burns was occupied with the great dock strike, he looked in one evening at the *Standard* office, and mentioned that he was going to speak in Dod Street, Limehouse. A representative of the journal accompanied him in a hansom; when the meeting opened it was found that dimness of illumination prevented the newspaper man from setting down his notes. A bystander near took the lamp from the hansom, and held it for the convenience of the reporter.

'Marvellous!' said the reporter, at the end. 'You held that lamp steadily, and without anything like a tremor.'

'Easily explained,' remarked the other. 'When I was a kid I was a blooming acolyte!'

All London boys cannot be acolytes, but any attention shown to them, any pains given to the encouragement of cheerfulness, may be reckoned as well worth doing. The Play Centre Fund now carries on the task of caring for children in the evening hours, and I have many reasons for wishing it a continuance of success. The youngsters, left

to themselves, can find too many opportunities for mischief, and some of these are extraordinarily attractive to the youthful mind ; unfortunately they lead to the Children's Court and to punishment. What, for example, can be more fascinating than the ringing of bells at private houses, the overturning of notice boards at shops ? I myself often feel inclined to do these things, and I believe the reason why I do not give in to the temptation is that I am not so swift of foot as the escaping youngster.

I observe that in the courts for grown-ups, folk are, at times, given a month's imprisonment for begging ; if we all had our deserts I should have, long since, served the term. My only defence would be that I have not made appeals for my own individual benefit. For the rest, I have written more supplications to the generous than the generous, I hope, remember ; I have ever found it difficult to refuse to lend my pen excepting in the cases where a mistaken secretary has offered payment for the task. In the main I have contrived to restrict my begging to the subject of children in distress, and it never ceases to amaze me—and, of course, to give me gratification—to find how willingly and bountifully people give in these instances. To take a very small affair. The Babies' Home in Hoxton which I ran cost about a thousand a year, and the cash, somehow or other, invariably arrived. For the little people who have not long entered the world, and for the old folk who are going soon to leave it, the purse of London is readily opened. There are, it can be confessed, degrees of willingness. A dramatist of my acquaintance once guaranteed to

give £10 to the Babies' Home if he should happen, on any occasion, to have three of his plays going in London at one time. This did occur, and I reminded him of his promise. He wrote to me :

'MY DEAR PETT,—It is perfectly disgusting of you to be philanthropic, and have homes for little children. But I feel that I cannot decently refuse the contribution, and here, damn you, here it is.'

I wrote back remarking that whilst the Lord loveth a cheerful giver, I, fortunately, was not nearly so particular.

Princess Alexander of Teck was the president, and Lady Bland-Sutton and Mrs. Kendal were on the council of the Babies' Home, and Alfred Sutro, and J. M. Barrie, and Lord Ludlow, and Miss E. M. Symonds were amongst the regular and liberal subscribers. We raised £260 by a performance at the New Theatre—it was the day the *Titanic* went down—£200, in another year, by an entertainment at Seaford House ; £230 by a concert in the Persian Hall at 47 Brook Street ; £160 by an entertainment arranged by dear Mrs. Kendal.

Lord Knutsford is the head of us all ; he has the trick of inventing an appeal to-day which occurs to other folk the day after to-morrow. He tells me that just now he is learning to play the clarinet, and I feel sure it is part of an ingenious scheme to raise money for the London Hospital.

I have always considered that appeals should not err in the direction of sloppiness. Any extravagance of pathos, too much luxury in sentiment, and the

words are read with an apprehensiveness that leads to refusal.

Years ago a fund was opened at Stafford House for the benefit of wounded Turkish soldiers. Some one asked the hall porter there how the donations were coming in.

‘Not very well,’ sighed the hall porter. ‘You see, sir, there’s a terrible lot of Christian feeling about in this country!’

One of the best examples of Christian feeling I encountered was in connection with the Playgoers’ Club. It was then by no means a wealthy club, and the action seemed all the more commendable. I had been asked to speak at one of their Sunday evenings, and it occurred to me, towards the end, that a note of seriousness might be introduced; the previous day I had seen a group of children standing in the cold—it was March of ’01—near the scenery entrance of a theatre, peering in, and trying to listen. I had been talking of the London boy, and I said, using my familiar argument:

‘May I be sincere for a moment, and urge that we should all do something to exhilarate his little life? The State educates him, and the State will look after him if he goes wrong, but the State does nothing to prescribe cheerfulness. You as individuals, and you as a club, could do a great deal in giving doses of happiness to these alert, grubby little kids either by helping some existing society, or by separate efforts of your own.’

Mr. Louis Harfeld, the honorary treasurer, promptly recommended that an East End theatre should be taken for one performance during the

season. He became president shortly afterwards, and he issued a circular to the members ; this brought in over £500, and 11,000 hard-up children were taken to the pantomime. We booked theatres for the afternoon—north, south, east, and west. At the first one—the Britannia—it had been arranged for the little girls to occupy the ground floor ; as the boys marched in they were checked for a moment before ascending the stairs.

‘ What ? ’ protested a six-year-old. ‘ Ain’t we going to sit alongside of our tarts ? ’

For many winters these good chaps of the Playgoers’ Club carried on the work with doggedness and enthusiasm ; I hope it will be counted to them for righteousness. Whatever credit there may be is due to them.

I was for some years a school manager in Somers Town ; later I have been on a group at Bethnal Green. The duties of a school manager are not onerous ; he has to visit about four of the educational establishments of the L.C.C., check the registers there—a certain difficulty arises in the East End when such alien names as Abram Robinovieski and Etta Schinisson have to be called—chat with the head teachers, and at the meeting of managers, discuss affairs, see applicants for teacher-ships and make a nomination, adjudicate on the rare occasions when a parent has a grievance against a member of the staff. And the managers can recommend changes and improvements, and the answer invariably comes that the subject has been referred to the appropriate committee, and eventually it is announced that on the grounds of economy the

appropriate committee regrets it is impossible at the moment—and so on. The managers are composed of lady social workers, retired or active tradespeople, clergymen, folk with a certain amount of leisure. There is a rule that no one can be a manager who has a child in one of the schools of the group ; not long since a group in Poplar, where the thinking is advanced, passed a resolution declaring that no one should be a manager who had not a child in the schools. There is an absence of preliminary tests for the appointment, and a story has been handed down of a manager who, entering a class-room of boys, made a sporting offer :

‘ I ’m going to select a word at random from the big slate,’ he said, ‘ and I ’ve got a new silver sixpence in my wais’coat pocket for the lad what gives the best and shortest definition, so to speak. Now,’ turning to the slate. “ Jeopardising.” There you are. The word is “ jeopardising.” Make a start ! ’

The front row supplied no answer. The other rows were equally silent, and the manager remarked caustically on the Education rate, the meagre achievements gained. The last boy in the last row held up his right hand.

‘ Please, sir, what does jeopardising mean ? ’

‘ Oh, well,’ said the manager, a little uneasily, ‘ I sh’d have thought every one knew what jeopardising meant. Jeopardising, I take it, means almost anything that is done by a jeopard ! ’

For the improved behaviour of the children of London we have to thank not so much the parents as the Council schools, and especially the scheme of

organised and controlled games under the supervision of a teacher. Time was—as suggested elsewhere—when cricket in the parks and the streets was not so much a game as a debating society. Time was when football, with bundles of jackets to indicate goals, started with a row and ended with a squabble, for all the world like a Peace conference.

The London child has learnt the rules of games, and plays decorously ; I am even more impressed by the fact that in knocking you aside, by inadvertence, when roller-skating, he always ejaculates ‘ Sorry ! ’ I do not persuade myself that the grief is irreparable ; I feel sure the child will make a swift recovery from mental anguish, but I like the word of apology. It does something to alleviate the pain of a barked shin. For the rest, youngsters are overjoyed to be asked the way to any destination known to them, and they collect omnibus and tram tickets with a whole-hearted fervour not equalled at Christie’s on the occasion of a great sale of curiosities.

I am apprehensive in beginning to tell stories of London children for fear of telling too many. But I must give a few.

Outside Great Portland Street station it was raining, and I wanted a taxi-cab. A small boy volunteered to fetch one from the rank ; as he came, holding the handle to indicate temporary ownership, a bigger lad tried to intervene and take the handle.

‘ Go away,’ ordered the smaller boy indignantly. ‘ Go away, can’t you. I was the one that was asked to get the taxi for the silly old swine,’ a touch of the cap to me ; ‘ wasn’t I, sir ? ’

I was walking up Seymour Street with a very tall actor friend ; a boy from a Somers Town school ran across with all the air of one eager to deliver an important message.

‘ Your chum ! ’ he said breathlessly.

‘ Well ? ’

‘ If he was to fall down,’ said the boy, ‘ he ’d find hisself ’alf way ’ome ; tell him ! ’

A lad called at a general shop, and asked for a packet of cigarettes. The proprietor declined to serve.

‘ Until you reach the legal age,’ he said brusquely, ‘ as I ’ve often told you before, I don’t dare supply you.’

The lad went off to the doorway.

‘ Got any broken biscuits ? ’ he asked.

‘ Lots,’ answered the shopkeeper readily.

‘ Mend them ! ’ said the boy.

You know, I expect, the story of the City Policeman and the Infuriated Musician. In case you have missed it :

‘ Do something to that boy over there,’ ordered the annoyed man. ‘ Box his ears, hang him, tell his mother ; do something.’

‘ Well, sir,’ said the policeman judicially, ‘ what ’s happened ? What ’s occurred ? What ’s took place ? ’

‘ I was coming along a minute or two ago, and he ran across and asked me—very civilly I admit—what the time was. I put down my violin case, I unbuttoned my overcoat, I took out my watch, and I told him it was ten minutes to three. “ Right,” he said. “ At three o’clock, get your ’air cut ! ” ’

‘ But you ’re all right, sir,’ said the constable reassuringly, ‘ you ’re all right. You ’ve got a good seven minutes to spare yet ! ’

Wonderful, wonderful youngsters. I wish I had been able to do more for them.

COMIC opera, when I first made its acquaintance on day visits to town, was, so far as words were concerned, under the thrall of Mr. H. B. Farnie. He translated all the libretti of French musical productions, and as little else but the successes of Paris was seen here, Farnie held a conspicuous place on the programme. I think I recognised that his lines were imperfect—one could witness the difficulties singers had in fitting them to the music—but I probably assumed the job could not be done better.

*' When we conspire as now we must,
We are true conspirators, I trust '*

was an example of Farnie's talent.

In '76 *Trial by Jury* was produced at the Strand Theatre, and, from then on, London understood that Arthur Sullivan could write music as attractive as that of Offenbach or Planquette, and that W. S. Gilbert could give to the words a quality that had evaded Farnie. The Strand Theatre, with a pit and gallery entrance in Surrey Street, was so small that audience and actors seemed always on friendly terms; the stage door was near, and the waiting crowd used to say as their favourite walked in :

' Good evening, Monseer Marius.'

And :

' Been a nice day, Mr. Cox.'

And then tell each other of splendid occasions

when they had enjoyed an even longer discussion with the great men. My own hero at the theatre was Fred Leslie. Fred Leslie, at the time, lived at New Cross (he had married the daughter of the proprietor of The Amersham Arms); he generally caught the last train from Charing Cross, and by that train I, after going to the play, also travelled. We were both second-class passengers, and I dare say I proved a good listener; certainly Fred Leslie was a good talker, and moreover he had a most engaging personality. He chatted about members of the Gaiety company, and he spoke of the infatuated young men who assembled to watch the departure of the chorus. One phrase, used by the ladies to describe their more conspicuous admirers, I have never forgotten:

‘Rude,’ they said; ‘rude, but rich!’

There was a wonderful night at the Gaiety when the company said good-bye to London before going out to Australia. The entire theatre cheered, and called for Nellie Farren, and for others; in the gallery, tears came when Fred Leslie knelt down and kissed the wooden boards of the stage. I declare I have no pleasanter memory than his yodeling song in *Rip Van Winkle* at the Alhambra; his voice had a charm of freshness that might well have been robbed by a greater course of training. A story of his concerned an argument at rehearsal between two dressers:

‘I keep on explaining,’ said one wearily, ‘as clear as ever I can that the piece belongs to the B.C. period. B.C., my lad. Consequently—and this you know as well as I do—buff boots will be worn!’

It was in *Rip Van Winkle* that Florence St. John sang :

‘ *Bright little glass, what is the spell,
Why is it only the truth you can tell.*’

She was then young, and always clever ; in later days I am told she developed a frankness of speech and a directness of manner that could be alarming. At her request, a young actress, not too well endowed with anything but intelligence, was brought to her.

‘ Oh, my dear,’ cried Florence St. John, staring at the girl’s features, ‘ Providence has been unkind to you ! ’

J. L. Toole, in the ‘eighties, was approaching his last days in the theatre, playing *Ici on parle français*, and giving an act from his favourite *Paul Pry* at benefit performances. Tree once assured me that if he made a compound of six of the most entertaining men of current times, it would not equal the good fellowship that Toole provided. I saw him in his final and decrepit condition, taken about in a Bath chair at southern seaside towns ; it was at Westgate that a stranger approached, and addressed the broken old man :

‘ You are Mr. Toole,’ said the stranger interestedly, ‘ and you once played *Paul Pry*.’

‘ Played it twice ! ’ whispered Toole.

They say the most painful situation ever witnessed in a club happened one Saturday evening when his attendant and some mistaken friends brought him—almost carried him—into the smoking-room at the Garrick. It was thought, apparently, that the once familiar surroundings might arouse dormant mental powers. It proved that Toole could recognise nobody, and that he was unable to speak. The aged

comedian had to be taken out, and the experiment was not tried again.

There were theatres with a reputation for ill-luck ; theatres where nothing but a tremendously fine play could succeed. Cyril Maude used to tell the incident which occurred when the theatre on the Embankment was struggling ; the man in the box office wore the chastened air which comes when business is not first-class. At half-past eight, in staring gloomily through the arched opening, he saw an old lady cross from the railway arch ; to his joy, she made direct for the steps of the theatre. She came in, and, placing twopence on the ledge of the box-office, said :

‘ Third single Victoria, young man ! ’

When receipts were meagre, salaries had to be cut down, and the stage folk were content with weekly payments that now sound incredible. A provincial manager once explained to me his system of bargaining with a new leading lady. ‘ She ’ll ask six ; I ’ll offer her three ; she ’s worth five ; I ’ll give her four ! ’

A general admiration existed in my youthful days for Ellen Terry and for Henry Irving, and the Lyceum could be reckoned amongst the fortunate theatres. As to Irving, the gallery had to admit that, unless the words were familiar, recognition was not immediate ; I discovered later that his stage manner of speech had no resemblance to his style in ordinary conversation, which was easy enough to follow. The most intelligible public performance came when he gave a reading of *Hamlet* for us at the Birkbeck. Our claims on him were slight ; he had

been a student in the elocution class of the City of London College at a time when it was housed at Sussex Hall, Leadenhall Street.

Amateurs at the Birkbeck, and elsewhere, in those days gave pieces of the *London Assurance* type. In *London Assurance*, one of the characters has to say :

‘ I love to watch the first tear that glistens in the eye of the morning, the silent songs that flowers breathe, the thrilling cry of the woodland minstrels to which the modest brook——’

In a later play, at the Princess’s, this sentence occurred : ‘ Rascality may flourish for a time, but, sooner or later, it vanishes into thin air, leaving only Dead Sea fruit behind ! ’

The modern drama may not be all that could be wished ; it is anyhow on a safer plane than this.

First night audiences are begging people on the stage to speak up ; they always did. I heard an appealing voice in the gallery call once to a partly audible young woman :

‘ I say, miss, let me know what you ’re talking about. I won’t tell nobody ! ’

A most disconcerting interruption came once when Tree had to make his entry, in a poetic drama, by throwing open centre doors. He stood there for a moment in an impressive attitude, arms folded.

‘ Next station, Marble Arch ! ’ shouted some one.

The gallery at, say, the St. James’s differed considerably from the gallery at, say, the Adelphi, but there were greater differences.

A walk across Waterloo Bridge, or a penny bus

from the Bank, and the galleries seemed so changed that they might have been in another world. The packed, excited, noisy patrons went up to the high roof like the side of a mountain ; they shouted and whistled to each other from the moment they rushed pell-mell from the doorways, and with but slight intermission, until such time as their voices gave out, or until the descent of the curtain on the first act. Half the noise was made by exuberant, joyous patrons ; the rest by quiet people begging for silence. Stern, uniformed men stationed at different points shouted a warning as the curtain went up :

‘ Keep order there, can’t ye ? ’

But this might well have been an appeal for more clamour, judging by the effect it had. All the time that servants on the stage far below were endeavouring to explain the plot in order to save trouble for the principals when they appeared—all this time the gallery was contesting and arguing. Once, at the Britannia, two men on opposite sides began a conversation :

‘ ‘Cheer, Ginger, ole man ! I never see you when I come in.’

‘ Them cheap eyes,’ bawled Ginger, ‘ come dearest in the long run. Where ’s the missis ? ’

‘ ‘Eaven knows ! ’ called out the other, ‘ I don’t. Last Sunday week we had a few words on the subject of grub——’

‘ Order there, can’t ye ? ’ from the attendant.

‘ And she on with her ’at and bunked off.’

‘ Tell us all about it.’

The recital was fired off at intervals in clear, distinct shots. Just before the curtain descended on Act One, at a quiet moment when the heroine

had given herself up for a murder which she thought she had committed, but had not really committed, the final sentence was aimed across from the other side :

‘ If I ’d bin in your place,’ said the voice clearly, ‘ I should have acted precisely sim’lar.’

Appetite in East End galleries was so well recognised that between the acts men went in and out with large open baskets containing refreshment in the shape of crusts of bread and cheese, thick sandwiches, and Banbury cakes. Not much drinking, except amongst the infants ; the evening was given up to the drama and food.

I went one night up into the gallery in Church Street, Edgware Road. ‘ Full ? ’ I asked of the attendant. ‘ Jammed ! ’ he said. He looked down the crowded rows. ‘ ’Ere,’ with a beckoning finger to a big lad, ‘ I ’ve had about enough of your nonsense. Outside ! ’ ‘ Well, but——’ began the lad. ‘ Outside, I tell you,’ said the attendant firmly, ‘ and let me have none of your lip, if you please.’ The big lad rose, came up the gangway and went out ; I obeyed the attendant’s orders, and took his seat. In coming away half an hour later, I asked the attendant what the lad had done to earn ejection. ‘ Oh,’ he said lightly, ‘ he hadn’t done nothin’, but you wanted a place to sed down in, didn’t you ? ’

The perfect gallery arrived when the Savoy Theatre opened. For the first time something like comfort was provided ; the patrons were decorously eager to listen to and to learn the new melodies of the new opera ; in the intervals every one was humming softly, and young women said graciously to their knights :

‘ George, if you really want to give me something for my next birthday, you can buy me the book of the music.’

A shared affection for the music of Arthur Sullivan led, I am certain, to more weddings than were contrived by any matrimonial journals of the day. The matrimonial papers had a wide, but not perhaps a large, circulation ; they contained heart cries from widowers in Australia and from single ladies in the Midlands ; in place of the words ‘ *avec tache*,’ which appeared in French advertisements of the kind, there was a more austere hint conveyed by the phrase ‘ not a flirt.’ I knew an editor of one of these journals ; I knew, too, the editor of *Old Moore’s Almanac* (he was also a director of *Black and White*, the pictorial weekly), and I had the acquaintance of the compiler of *Zadkiel’s Almanac*. He was an earnest, painstaking, elderly gentleman, arriving at his prophecies by close and elaborate calculations, and he lived at Streatham.

Edward Lloyd was, when I first heard him, in his prime, and Sims Reeves was, as the French say, on his return. Sims Reeves lived at Norwood, in the house now occupied by Sir William Treloar, and the fact that his voice had to be nursed carefully, and that it was sometimes impossible for him, owing to the temperature, to fulfil his engagements, supplied the chatterers in London with enough material to build up a theory. It was indeed, at the time, quite usual to say of any public man that he drank to excess, and few people doubted the assertion. Anyhow, there was always a doubt at concerts whether or not Sims Reeves would appear ; when

he did step on the platform his reception was vociferous, and to the end of his singing life he was never permitted to leave until he had given 'Come into the garden, Maud.' The fire and vigour that Santley retained had gone out with Sims Reeves long ere he made his final bow. To hear him sing was then like inspecting Gustave Doré's pictures at the gallery in New Bond Street; a duty rather than a pleasure.

The music-hall sketch of the period had the hardest task set in the world. It was the very Liebig's extract of melodrama or farce. In fifteen or eighteen minutes it had to introduce you to a set of characters; give you some momentous episode; involve the principals in it; extricate them, leave the right people happy and the wrong people desolate; the band (which had seized the opportunity to creep out) came back on hands and knees just in time to play two triumphant chords with a weak pretence of having watched the play with the closest interest from start to finish. Mostly the sketch included a revolver, and this, once brought on, gave to the gallery all the emotion of terror; strong women stopped their ears, and weak men gripped strong women's arms, or waists. The sketch revolver was a peculiar instrument of warfare. If a lady, in moment of peril, aimed up at the flies, it hit an objectionable man through the heart, and it served him right; with it people blew out their own brains by aiming at some one else's vulnerable heel. Few knots in the old music-hall sketch were too difficult to unravel; no corner so tight that a virtuous person might not loose himself from it.

'And whom,' cried a much tried but happily rescued lady in a sketch imported from America, 'whom have I to thank for this unexpected rescue?' 'Me,' cried the short soubrette from the top of a cliff, 'me and ' pointing upwards, 'Gard!'

A certain vehemence was required in these brief sketches not usually allowed in full-length plays, where the two and a half hours' traffic of the stage permitted a greater leisureliness. As the years go on the quietness of tone in plays seems to have become accentuated, and vehement situations are so rare that they present difficulties. An actor-manager, in rehearsing a play, found himself called upon to throw the leading lady to the floor, and the scene was gone through four times without obtaining approval from the author seated in the stalls. Despairing of giving satisfaction, the actor-manager suggested they should change places, and this was done. On the stage, the author gripped the poor leading lady, and after a furious tussle flung her away violently. 'I see what you mean now,' remarked the actor-manager, from the stalls, 'but I ought to tell you that I have never before seen any actress treated in this brutal way. Never!' He paused for a moment. 'Excepting Judy!' he added.

In the gallery, an emotional woman noticed that some one with a beard entered a private box. In spite of her husband's counsel, stood up, and waved her programme.

'Three cheers for the King,' she screamed loyally. 'Go' bless him. Hip-hip-hooray!'

Others also stood up. One was able to inform the lady that the new arrival in the private box was

not a representative of royalty, but Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, the author of the play.

‘There you are,’ said the husband reproachfully. ‘That’s like you, that is. Shouting yourself ‘oarse, and getting yourself excited all over a bloomin’ reporter!’

Invitations to the theatre began to come my way, but there were reasons why they were not always used, and I have a small collection of them. A ticket, before me as I write, is headed Adelphi Theatre, dated December the 16th, ‘97, and granting admission of two to the stalls. On that night William Terriss was killed near the stage door, and the theatre remained closed. I saw Prince, the murderer, some weeks later at a London terminus, in charge of warders, and Prince’s conceit and gratification in being identified by curious travellers was undisguised.

I found a thrill on entering the gallery that never came when one advanced to the reserved seats. The gallery has always been the articulate part of a London theatre, and its determination in the old days to have its shilling’s worth was keener perhaps than its resolve now that it has to pay more. The added charges of admission have tended to alter the quality of the patrons; moreover, general deportment has improved, and there is no longer the spirit of contention between gallery and stage that used to exist. I imagine there must have been a group of youths in the ‘nineties who went to first nights bent on a row; not satisfied with their evening unless the element of disorder had been included. It was a taste which belonged to the period. In Hyde Park

when, on Sunday evenings, music was given, young larrikins chased each other around and around the bandstand. In the suburbs, their sport was to combine and send quiet folk off the pavement ; the scene was referred to—not by themselves—as *The Monkeys' Parade*. These youths have now reached maturity, and I daresay check very sternly any suggestion of anything like horse-play on the part of sons or nephews.

Other times, better manners.

I went back to the gallery the other evening to ascertain why it held such an affectionate place in my memory. The reason became obvious so soon as the curtain went up, and I allude to it here in order that youths compelled, for financial reasons, to patronise the cheaper seats in a theatre may recognise the compensations of indigence. From that range, and from that range only, all women on the stage are beautiful and attractive. Young men in the front row of the stalls may, ere now, have fallen in love with ladies of the theatre ; how they manage it I do not know. But to worship from the gallery is easy. It is almost unavoidable. I wish good fortune to lads who ascend to the gallery, and I hope their income will improve year by year ; let them, nevertheless, retain places in the gallery as long as they can, and in this way preserve their illusions.

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I WENT lecturing in order to earn money for the Babies' Home. The reason was sometimes alluded to by the chairman, and it is worth while mentioning that only in Scotland did members of the audience occasionally come up after the lecture, and hand me notes to be added to the fee paid by the society. And in Scotland you find the most attentive people to face from the platform. They miss nothing. If cricket ever gets a hold north of the Border the teams ought to provide some remarkably smart wicket-keepers.

Birmingham—by the good offices, I expect, of Whitworth Wallis—gave me a first introduction to the lecture platform, and I spoke in the Midland Institute there at various times. The form sent with the invitation requested you to say whether you desired a fee of ten or of fifteen guineas ; I have wondered if anybody persuaded himself to accept the lower sum. Fees are higher now, and indeed, with large railway fares, and the expensiveness of hotels, they should be ; there are many deductions to be made from the cheque handed over by the secretary. But the game is worth playing if only for the acquaintance it brings with towns other than London, and folk other than Londoners. It is illuminating to note the frank pride and the local patriotism. A member of the committee in a Yorkshire town was speaking to me of its activities.

‘ Fact o’ matter is,’ he declared solemnly, ‘ where Ossett leads, t’ rest follow ! ’

One finds the idea in the concrete when wills are proved. Men who have made their riches in a town remember the town in drawing up a list of their bequests. I have sometimes wished that this generosity could be acknowledged without putting up a statue of the benefactor ; it imposes an undue tax on the art of the sculptor.

Chairmen, I regret to say, are going out of fashion. They interest me because I am always wondering what they will say, and how they will say it. Occasionally the chair has referred to me as the well-known author whose name is familiar to all—Mr. Ridge Pett. Ere now the gentleman presiding has taken the opportunity to answer a criticism in a local journal concerning himself and the building trade. I have heard a chairman deliver a severe attack to the members present on the members who were absent, and work up to a state of hot-faced violence.

‘ Unless there is an improvement, something will have to be done. I say, and I say it with the full knowledge that my words will go beyond these four walls, that we cannot go on as we are going. Our people must wake up, and take an interest in what is going on around ’em. Ladies and gentlemen, I have much pleasure in calling on the speaker, and I hope he will amuse us. We shall endeavour to get better lecturers next year.’

A distinguished medical man in the North remarked, in introducing me, that he had not read any of my novels, but he generally found his patients were acquainted with them. I mentioned that it was, at any rate, interesting to his profession to

know that when folk did read my books they had to send forthwith for the doctor. Not long since Miss Margaret Balfour, E. V. Lucas, and I had to judge at some competitions. A Bishop, in his opening speech, referred to Miss Balfour as Miss Carrie Tubb ; he said that Mr. Lucas was Evoë of *Punch* ; I hoped he would, when he came to me, speak of Infant's Food, but he lapsed into accuracy, and missed his chance of performing the hat trick. The usual statement by the chair is to define his task in the sufficiently well-known phrase :

‘ The duty of a chairman is to stand up, to speak up, and to shut up ! ’ It always goes well.

A lecturer realises in the first three minutes whether the audience is good or merely indifferent, and the attitude means everything to one who has to keep going for an hour and a quarter. Audiences, at their best, can be splendid. I have arrived at a town, after a long journey from London, tired, and, the period being winter, suffering, it may be, from a cold. (A drawback of a lecture tour is that it mars the full enjoyment of ill-health.) A hasty meal ; a change into the suit that waiters and lecturers have to wear. And then to go on the platform and speak to, say, two thousand eager, appreciative men and women—this, believe me, forms a remedy for depression that no chemist has on his shelves. And if, at half-time, you should find yourself beginning to tire, great encouragement may be obtained if, on your notes at this stage, you have been thoughtful enough to write the little word ‘ Cheque.’

The handing over of the fee is generally done as though it were an act forbidden by the law, and likely

to get both payer and receiver into trouble with the police. In certain instances a spirit of reckless confidence is displayed, and the cheque is presented brazenly, openly, and before the lecture has been delivered. Now and again, the fee is paid by a bundle of notes ; it creates an effect of ample recognition that the order to a bank never conveys.

Drawing-room meetings, in comparison with other platform experiences, are a rest cure. They have the virtue that they seldom entail long journeys ; they have the defect of being extremely soporific. However crowded a room may be, there is always a hush and a holy calm ; the speaker who can raise such an audience to anything like enthusiasm has not yet been found. Very few men about, and consequently no risk of hand applause ; the parquet flooring is an excuse for not stamping with feet. In my time I have, when speaking in these circumstances, been grateful for an involuntary sneeze from somebody near an open window ; I knew it was not meant as a signal of encouragement, but it formed, anyhow, a break in the silence. One type of the drawing-room speech in great favour is the apologetic.

‘ When I received the invitation from your hard-working secretary, my feeling was one of sheer amazement. Why, I said to myself, why had I been chosen to address you when so many others, far more capable——’ A detailed history of the wavering of the mind, final acceptance. ‘ And now I must not stand in the way of other speakers, and I therefore beg to move the resolution which stands in my name ! ’

Anecdotes are wasted on a drawing-room meeting ;

they are appreciated only by ladies and gentlemen of the Press. I once told the story of the sick millionaire who asked a Dean if a gift to the church of ten thousand pounds would ensure his arrival in heaven.

‘Sir,’ said the Dean frankly, ‘I can make no guarantee, but this I do assure you. It is an experiment well worth trying!’

When the meeting was over, two ladies, begging to be forgiven, intercepted me and mentioned that a brother-in-law of theirs occupied the position of Dean; they could not believe that he or any other Dean would make such an answer to such a question. I said the Dean was not really a Dean, but an Archdeacon, and they were satisfied.

A similar protest came, in writing, from Ennismore Gardens when—this was in my early days—I had incautiously told the yarn of Bishop Stubbs reaching a village church on Sunday evening. The verger pointed out that his lordship had had a long cross-country journey, that his lordship was about to deliver a sermon; would his lordship permit him to mix for his lordship a good stiff glass of whisky and water.

‘No!’ said the Bishop firmly. ‘For three reasons, no. First, that I am, as you say, about to go into the pulpit to preach; second, that I am chairman this year of a temperance society; and, third, that I have just had one!’

Father Hugh Benson was a useful speaker at drawing-room meetings. He followed me, on one occasion, in the agenda, and his allusions were so kindly that, when he sat down, I passed along a card on which I had written :

‘Almost thou persuadest me to be a Roman Catholic.’

He sent back the pencilled answer :

‘Quite easy, my dear chap. Do it now !’

The Guildhall, in the City of London, is a trying place for a speaker, but there is a useful trick of addressing your remarks either to Gog or to Magog stationed at the far end of the building. In Albert Hall, you have to speak with deliberation, separating the words carefully, and even when this is done folk take up the pained hand-to-ear attitude of listening. Lord Balfour generally sprays his throat before starting to talk at Albert Hall. There exists a huge aerodrome hut at Farnborough, where a speaker should, if well advised, use a megaphone. Perhaps the most exacting trials come in the large town halls of the North set up in order to outvie the town halls of neighbouring towns ; for some reason there is always just enough empty space at the back to take the voice, and to keep it. Ere now strong men, facing the difficulties for ten minutes, have given in, returning to their hotel to indulge in a good cry. One meets, too, the halls which possess an echo. Raise the tones above a certain pitch, and at the end of each sentence comes a mocking sound.

On the few occasions I have had to speak on behalf of a charity from the stage of a London theatre, I have found the circumstances remarkably pleasant and easy ; little more than the conversational method has to be adopted ; even in a large space as at the Palladium there is no necessity to show explosiveness. The army huts in France,

during the war, looked discouraging, but, in the absence of noise overhead, it was possible to make oneself audible, and the men helped by listening courteously. It was only when they were preached at with undue severity that they exhibited resentment. A minister, on a warm Sunday afternoon, gave a long address to a tired group.

‘Friends,’ he boomed presently, ‘I have been charged by my contemporaries with being too broad-minded, but here is the view I hold. That supposing you brave lads are called upon to-morrow to attack the foe. And supposing that, in the course of the engagement, one of you receives a mortal wound. And supposing in the brief interval before drawing his last breath, he confesses all his sins to his Maker, why then—whether I am too broad-minded or not—I cannot help thinking that the Almighty, in His infinite mercy, will forgive him.’

A voice from the middle rows, ‘And so He jolly well ought!’

I have always recommended a certain diffidence in public speaking; with most of us it is real, and where not real it should be assumed. Convey to the hearers the impression that you may break down, and their helpfulness of a disaster will induce them to watch and attend eagerly. On the other hand, an excess of humility is a mistake. Phil May once consented to talk on art at a hall in John Street, Adelphi, and two artist friends undertook to compose the lecture. On the night fixed, they pulled him out of Romano’s, took him to an ante-room of the hall, and presented him with the scrip. It began :

‘Far be it from me to presume to dictate a question of art; but this, with all modesty, I may venture to say.’

Phil May, having read thus far, lobbed the pages into the grate. He went on the platform, unhampered by conventional phrases.

So many folk attend lectures merely out of inquisitiveness, and a curiosity to see rather than to hear the speaker, that, having satisfied this craving, they are disposed to sit back and gaze at pictures on the wall. It is here that the usefulness of an anecdote comes in. They may not want to attend to your remarks on life, or conduct, or washing-machines, but they are extremely anxious to miss nothing in the shape of a yarn. Sprinkle the talk with stories at irregular intervals, and they are kept ever on the look out. At times you will observe contentment signal on their features, and you know they are proposing to dine out on the anecdote that winter.

Actors, as a class, do not shine brilliantly on the platform; I imagine that, used to reciting other people’s words, they are perplexed when compelled to find their own. But Charles Wyndham, in his day, could make a brilliant speech, helped by the curiously engaging voice which remained when powers of memory began to fail. I have seldom found a case where inability to recall names was so complete. Once, at the New Theatre, he beckoned to a member of his staff.

‘This note,’ he said, in a puzzled way, ‘which I have just written; I want it sent by a messenger to one of my theatres, and just for the moment I can’t think—— Well, it isn’t intended for this one, where we are now. That stands to reason.’

‘The Criterion, perhaps, Sir Charles.’

‘No.’ Tapping impatiently at his forehead. ‘Not the Criterion. The theatre I mean is the one that bears my name.’

‘Wyndham’s.’

‘Oh, good lad,’ he cried relievedly. ‘You have helped me out of a serious difficulty!’

At the first production, in Liverpool, of a play in which Wyndham was interested, he, speaking briefly but with emotion, said: ‘I thank you, loyal citizens of Glasgow, for the reception you have given to the comedy!’

Men of the army or the navy bark their arguments in a defiant manner. The clergy have, very naturally, a readiness in speech denied to most, and at times they can adopt the dramatic method. A vicar known to me used to carry this into the pulpit. He was preaching one Sunday evening on the marriage at Cana.

‘One can imagine, my brethren, the situation. The butler comes forward. The ruler of the feast looks at him inquiringly. “Sir,” says the butler,—here the vicar lowered his voice to a confidential whisper, and spoke with a new accent—“sir, it is my painful dooty to inform you that, by a hover-sight for which I am in no way whatsoever responsible, there isn’t a single, solitary drop of wine anywhere in the ’ouse!”’

Education is not a vivacious subject, and few, in talking of it, can make the topic engaging. Even men like Dean Inge of St. Paul’s and other authorities have been known to speak on education at the Mansion House for twenty-five minutes, and leave the matter duller than they found it. The Dean

did something more exhilarating at an annual meeting of the Waifs and Strays Society, held at Church House, Westminster. A young Princess was there, and a long line of aristocratic children advanced—some in the company of magnificent nurses—and handed in purses. Two or three of us spoke, and the Dean, when it came to his turn, said that as a student of the question of heredity, and as one having some acquaintance with the theory of Eugenics, he had to confess that many of his views were upset by the spectacle witnessed that afternoon. To think that the dear little people who had made a procession were, in most cases, the offspring of neglectful, perhaps criminal——

A shiver went through the hall ; mothers from Belgravia gave moans of protest ; folk close to the Dean tried to put him right, but, unable to hear them, he went on. It was left to the next speaker to point out that the children were not Waifs and Strays. The mothers regained some of their composure, but they still had an aspect of huffiness when they and their libelled infants departed from the hall and stepped into their cars.

Sir Edward Clarke told me he had never experienced any joy equal to that of convincing a large and antagonistic political audience. My own knowledge of meetings of the kind is limited, and I am certain nothing I could say from the platform would effect a change in the views already held. In the days of the women's suffrage movement I had to dodge oranges and eggs ; ere now babies in an audience have disputed my arguments, and have invariably conquered in the struggle. During the

War Loan period, I was asked to speak at a large number of meetings in London, and, on occasions, these were interrupted by air raids ; you cannot give proper attention to the subject of thrift when disturbance of this nature is going on. In regard to political meetings, it is shocking to have to confess that no candidate supported by me has been able to move the vote of thanks to the Returning Officer ; as the defeated man he has had the task of seconding the motion.

The sport is one in which—as in other sports—there must always be a loser, and the disappointments are many. In a house in Cheyne Gardens one evening, all the guests were interested because on the opposite side lived a man who was a candidate at an important by-election taking place that day. We were told that fireworks had been prepared ; the display waited for the arrival of news. At a late hour, a messenger came hot foot, and immediately rockets went off, illuminations were set in each window. We, as lookers-on, shared the exultant mood, and I think we drank to the health of the resident over the way. Suddenly another messenger arrived, and at once every light was extinguished, the fireworks stopped. The first news had, it appeared, been based on hope rather than veracity.

The greatest political meeting I attended was one held, at Her Majesty's Theatre, just after the Home Rule split. Goschen was there, and Lord Harrington, and Lord Salisbury, and Mr. W. H. Smith, and Goschen's speech remains in the storehouse of memory because he had the hoarse voice of the corn-crake, and because, in spite of this, he was the

most effective of all the speakers. (This was in '85.) I took notes, for debating society purposes, of two sentences in Goschen's speech :

'Justice has often been described as wearing a bandage over the eyes. But I did not know that her worshippers were to remain blindfold until the bandage was torn off under the pressure of expediency and fear.'

And :

'The British democracy is as capable as any other class of entertaining strong feelings in support of Imperial unity. But those who have the ear of democracy must not be allowed to preach the gospel that surrender means justice, or that capitulation is generosity.'

Salisbury, speaking on the occasion in his grave, deliberate way, declared that certain statesmen had decided to burn that which they adored, and to adore that which they had burnt.

I heard Gladstone once. It was in the rain on Blackheath, and I was struck by the north country accent of the old man, astonished at the vigour of his oratorical methods. For all his eloquence he had to be content with the position of junior member for Greenwich ; Boord, the gin distiller and a Conservative, was at the top of the poll.

Beaconsfield died in '81, and I neither saw nor heard him ; I once knew an old man who had been a friend of the Tory statesman, and he told me of an illuminating incident in Disraeli's career. In the early 'sixties a small deputation brought news of importance concerning an opponent. This gentleman, it seemed, at an advanced age, had entered

upon an intrigue with his wife's lady's-maid ; the deputation submitted the particulars, and waited for compliments and thanks. Disraeli rose from his chair.

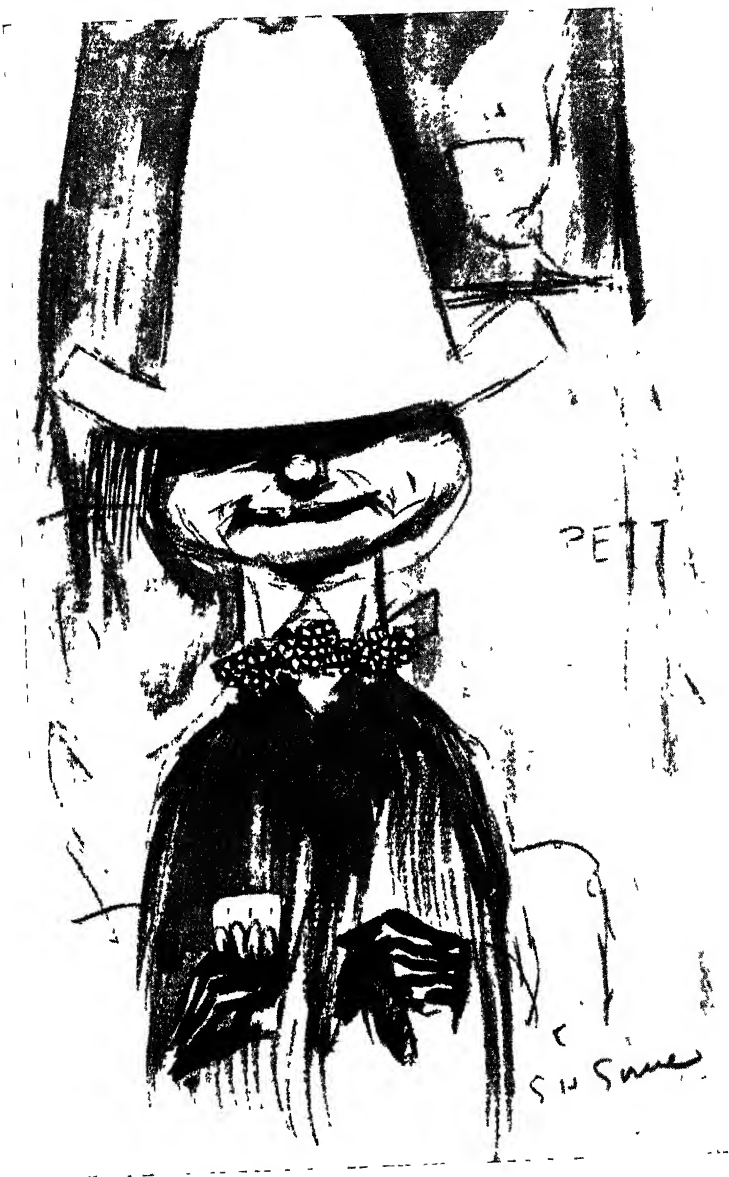
'No, gentlemen, no,' he said resolutely ; 'I am fighting this man of whom you speak with the utmost of my ability, but the weapons I use are clean and fair. The door is just behind you. Good afternoon.' The disappointed visitors crept out, and Disraeli turned to his secretary. 'The fools !' he ejaculated. 'The poor, demented fools ! They can't see that, if I made the information known, the man it concerns would become more idolised than ever !'

Lord Rosebery spoke well, and used gesture with a certain liberality. In advancing an argument he clenched a fist, and when the climax came struck with it the palm of the other hand.

The most truculent, sledge-hammer speaker I ever heard was Charles Bradlaugh. At a meeting, some individual, quite early, interjected a remark not in the best taste concerning Mrs. Annie Besant. Bradlaugh gave him a verbal trouncing that lasted four minutes, and took up the main contention ; the interrupter may have thought that his punishment was over. Instead, there were half a dozen occasions during the speech when Bradlaugh, suddenly whirling around, pointed to the man, and denounced him afresh ; his last scornful words were addressed to the same objective. Outside the hall, after the meeting closed, I caught sight of the tactless interrupter. He was in a state of collapse, and weeping self-sympathetically.

Sir John Bennett, the clockmaker of Cheapside,

to take a very different type, was one of the conspicuous figures at London public meetings of the 'eighties. No one quite understood the reason for his popularity unless it was that, in certain quarters of the City, he had not gained popularity; the fact remained that on the 9th of November he received plaudits which were not always given to Lord Mayors. He was ruddy-faced, white-haired, and he took some trouble to arrive at meetings unpunctually and, in this way, obtained a marked reception. It was said of him by his fervent admirers that he rarely caught any but the last train home to Chislehurst.



According to S. H. SIME

THERE used to be a notice in a Jermyn Street hotel to this effect :

‘ Every guest must be introduced personally, or by letter.’

I daresay that, with the arrival of large establishments, strictness has been relaxed ; in the old days, certain guests were expected each year at certain periods, and their undeniably certain tastes were studied and remembered. To-day you are given a card after registering at the office, and thenceforth you are to the authorities nothing but a number for a page-boy to chant when your presence is required.

During the early stages of my London life, the paucity of hotels did not affect me, but I observed, in the case of folk able to patronise them, that elaborate procedure was necessary, and often there came a hint that the favour was one tendered by the proprietor and not a favour received. At the family hotels in Cecil Street, Strand, I have seen the owner shake hands with departing guests in a manner that was either friendly or patronising. There were strict rules concerning the admission of children. Night porters were not included in the staff. As to prices—‘ At the West End,’ says an elderly notice which is before me, ‘ apartments may be obtained from ten shillings a week for a single bedroom, with use of sitting-room and attendance.’ I imagine the

figure quoted must have been intended as bait, and probably some ingenuity was shown on the bill in regard to extras. A more dependable announcement says that at Long's, in Clifford Street, the day's charges for a bedroom, breakfast with coffee and cold meat, dinner with soup and joint, attendance, were fifteen shillings and sixpence. De Keyser's Hotel, opposite the City end of Blackfriars Bridge, introduced a fresh note, and there came the large buildings in the Strand and in Northumberland Avenue. (The Grand was opened in '80.) Contemporary with the family hotels in the West End were some of a retiring nature near Holborn Bars, and at Furnival's Inn. Ladies were specially invited to the Holborn Restaurant with the assurance that a room there was set apart for them. The notice already quoted declares in its alluring way that 'many excellent hotels and taverns have a luncheon bar at which, during the day, you may have a chop for sixpence, or a plate of hot meat, with vegetables and bread, for about eightpence.' There, again, I feel slightly incredulous, but it would be pleasing to think it was based on truth. Chops, in my youthful days, were a shilling. At Monico's, one could order a good meal that, without wine, cost you no more than half a crown. Soho was then much as Soho is now, but cheaper and more untidy; the menu said between the items 'or,' which the unwary took to be 'and,' and the dinner was never anything like a feast. In regard to wine :

'I want you to bring me,' said a customer impressively, 'half a bottle of Chablis, or shall I say Sauterne? Yes, the best Sauterne you have; and

see that the cork is drawn carefully !' The other customer gave his order. ' For me,' he said, ' half a bottle of Beaune—no, I think I 'll have Pommery, '96 ; take the chill off, and bring it in a basket. Don't forget.' The waiter went to the speaking-tube. ' One small white,' he called down, ' and one small red !'

At a restaurant in Leicester Square, the proprietor used to tell me, in confidential moments, that he lost money over each customer unless the customer ordered wine. I do not know how he would fare in these days. Water is a favourite beverage, and for water, no matter the year of the vintage, a small sum only can be placed on the bill ; the ostentatious and the truly rich alone give commands for champagne. Most of us are satisfied with a still Moselle or a Barsac, and these of necessity are limited in price to about three and six the half-bottle. As for the heady drinks, the wise avoid them, and will not take them at any price. In Spain I have tasted a glass of Rioja that, if finished, would have induced a lengthy sleep ; at a City dinner, to which one goes with the courageous resolve to eat and drink slightly in excess, I have had to leave, because of its potency, a glass of Chateau Yquem. It does seem that the old ability to drink deeply is going out. We—to say nothing of posterity—are likely to be the gainers.

Poets, in the 'nineties, had their houses of call, and in the Holborn district, because there was an elderly rhymmer named Todhunter, we conferred a title on them, and they were known as Tod Blackburn, Tod Lowry, Tod Johnson, and so on. They all had the gift of persistent conversation. Lionel Johnson was a frail, short youth, to be found in

Henekey's wine bar of an evening ; I have seen him tumble off his high stool there, and, seated on the sawdust floor, continue the discussion. He was then living in Gray's Inn Square, and it was usually a duty, imposed on somebody, to escort him home. The poor, clever chap eventually fell in the roadway in '02, and died at Bartholomew's.

Vernon Blackburn, at one time sub-editor of the *Tablet*, also died young ; H. D. Lowry was nothing more than youthful when he gave in. The group talked with enthusiasm of their contemporary, Rudyard Kipling, and with reverence and gratitude of Mrs. Alice Meynell. There were great stories concerning Kipling. Of a notable editor sending to him, on the receipt of the manuscript of *Tomlinson*, a brief telegram, 'God bless you !' Of *Bolivar* being written in the office of the *St. James's Gazette*, and the verses penned rapidly until the last had to be started, and that, with

'Euchred God Almighty's storm, bluffed the Eternal Sea,'

occupying far greater time than all the rest had taken.

An older poet I used to meet, and one of a more reserved disposition, was John Davidson, who wrote *Fleet Street Eclogues*, and other works. He talked to me once for half an hour, at a friend's house, on the subject of putting a voluntary end to one's life ; in '09 his body was found at Mounts' Bay.

The insistent detail of meals in taverns was the depraved look of the cruet-stand, and the grubby appearance of the tablecloth. The cloth provided a record of the tumblers set on it during the past

week ; in the City this was added to by pencilled reckonings in pounds, shillings, and coppers by those not gifted in mental arithmetic. Waiters' collars had that suggestion of remoteness from the laundry to be found in the neckwear of High Church curates to-day. There was an air of grease over everything. The bread was of the woollen kind known as household ; the capital little rolls had not been introduced, and protests against quality were received with the derision that mothers give to complaining children. The bill of fare itself furnished samples of the food ; butter could always be found there. Dusty, artificial flowers stood in a vase, making a pathetic appeal to be treated as though they were freshly cut from the garden ; a palm near the empty fire-place bore the green tag of the drapery firm from which it had been purchased. A cat strolled around declining the food of the establishment.

There were odd corners on the lower river, the more available because steamers went from London Bridge to Greenwich, calling at the piers on the way ; only moderate refreshment could be obtained there. You came across 'The Town of Ramsgate' at Wapping, where a dozen stone steps led down to the river, and a chalk notice mentioned, for the information of the belated traveller, 'A Boat all night at Page's.' At the end of High Street, 'The Turk's Head,' where the bay window on the river side gave a view of the Thames. Not far off 'The Prospect of Whitby' and 'The Anchor and Hope.' I once had a meal further down the river at the 'Ship' ; my only companions were ghosts. Old residents at Greenwich can tell you of whitebait

dinners, and members of the Cabinet arriving by boat and departing by hackney coach, but they much prefer to speak—as a more alluring incident—of the charge brought against one Pook of murdering a young woman, in the early 'seventies, at Kidbrooke Lane, and the concern shown for many years after his acquittal by people who were on his side, or against him. A little encouragement, and they will recite the particulars of the case of Charles Peace.—'Kep' a very smart 'ouse here at Greenwich he did'—and describe how, on a November night, P.C. John Robinson—well known to the narrator, and afterwards made night watchman at a bank in Lewisham High Road—was in the avenue leading from St. John's Park. Robinson saw Peace come out of a house, and followed him. 'Keep back,' shouted Peace, 'or, by God, I'll kill you!' A bullet entered Robinson's elbow, and two shots went through his uniform without hurting him. At the trial, Peace finished his appeal with, 'So, oh, my lord, have mercy upon me, I pray and beseech you. I will say no more, but, oh, my lord, have mercy upon me; my lord, have mercy upon me.' All this will the elderly Greenwich resident tell in preference to speaking of Cabinet dinners. Queer, the attraction that crime, with its details, has for most people. The reason may be that most people live uneventful lives.

There was always Simpson's in the Strand for visitors from the country, and for Londoners endowed with a good appetite. And there was Simpson's Divan, where one could smoke and play (or watch) games of chess. A Cigar Divan, as

distinct from a tobacconist's, appeared to include the furniture of a crimson plush settee ; the owner wore a smoking-cap with tassels, and he was sometimes assisted by an opulent, black-haired daughter.

The general idea of meals, both public and private, in the late 'eighties was that they should be heavy, and that they should be served in sombre environments. The wall-paper for a dining-room was of a dark red. The lighting dim, and servants, waiting, moved about like shadows. Voices were kept down until the ladies left the table, and then with chairs brought up near to the host, a touch of vivacity was allowed to creep in, and frequently the discussion was on political affairs, and you either considered that Mr. Gladstone could do no wrong, or you held the opinion that he could, by no chance or accident, do right ; for the cross-bench mind there was little toleration. As a result, anxious glances came from the women when their men folk entered the drawing-room ; they entertained a fear and a suspicion that there had been a quarrel over the port, and their apprehensions were generally correct. Nowadays, with lighter meals and lighter wines, the conversation of men takes a lighter turn, and even a difference of view in regard to politics no longer necessitates an attitude of open enmity. Any one who talks solemnly makes himself, at once, a target for the rest. And the billiard-room has helped cheeriness whether in the private house or at larger assemblies ; every one can play, and every one wants to play.

The modern Londoner is inclined to disclose bitterness if he has to walk many steps in order to

find a tobacco shop or a restaurant ; it is a strain upon his energies that he is rarely called on to undergo. The economical restaurant of the Lyons type is a boon to the Londoner beyond all reckoning. In the old days, tea-rooms were few, they were small, the art of making coffee had not been acquired, and the tea was Samson-like in its strength. On the many-paned windows, lozenge-shaped notices appeared—‘ Cakes ’ and ‘ Muffins,’ and ‘ Biscuits ’—and, now and again, the establishments had a wine licence, and women who needed something just to keep the cold out were able to obtain a comforting glass ; because of the scarcity of these places, it was the custom for ladies of the middle class on travel to carry a small flat bottle which could be uncorked, sipped at, and recorked, whenever the demand was urgent. Female passengers, going from Charing Cross to Tunbridge Wells of an evening, often consumed a hearty meal before reaching London Bridge ; men, in corner seats, owned a candle-holder which, fixed against the window, and the candle lighted, gave them the chance of reading the newspaper. In the winter, steaming foot-warmers were provided, but only for long journeys ; travelling rugs were borne by experienced voyagers, and air cushions brought by the delicately nurtured.

To some folk, the most staggering incident of the great European conflict was the introduction of waitresses to West End clubs. It really brought the war home to the members. In a few clubs the girls have remained, and it must be admitted they go about quietly and perform their duties with alertness,

but I have a prejudice on the side of young men who fought and are now, too often, wanting employment. The newer male waiter is a better chap than his ancestor. For one thing, the ancestor drank. I knew an elderly waiter at a club who, being already confused in thought, took six orders in the smoking-room. Returning with the loaded tray, it occurred to him that he was not mentally capable of dealing with the situation ; he could not be sure which member had commanded which drink. With great presence of mind he consumed the six drinks, sank on the floor, and dozed happily. I knew, too, a hall porter who was a friend of melancholy ; hall porters are often in the way of draughts, and this induces them to take sombre views. On his way to the club, his hat had blown off, and somebody, rescuing it, had taken it home. The hall porter looked on the incident as proof of the break-up of all society.

‘ By this time next week,’ he said moodily, ‘ we shall have the streets of London runnin’ with blood ! ’

It is fair to add that he recognised to the full the sanctuary that club membership provides. Entering the lounge, he would say, in a whisper :

‘ You ’re being asked for on the telephone. A lady, I ’m afraid it is. Are you in the club, sir ? ’

At an early stage of my London days I joined the Yorick Club ; the subscription was two guineas a year, and the entrance fee two guineas. It had cosy rooms on a second floor in Beaufort Buildings, a cul-de-sac, and of an evening we could see the Savoy players go in at their stage door. The club opened at noon and shut at two o’clock in the

morning ; it had a proprietor who consented to allow himself to be called House Manager, and he ran the club with remarkable skill. The club remained at Beaufort Buildings for nine years ; when the Strand alterations began, it moved to Bedford Street on the left hand of an entrance to St. Paul's, Covent Garden. Amongst the members at near to the start were John Coates, the singer ; Commander Crutchley, who wrote a very good book of experiences ; Bartley Denniss, afterwards a Member of Parliament ; Herbert Flemming, who took theatrical companies to South Africa and Australia ; James Greig, discoverer of the Farington Diary ; Henry A. Lytton, of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas ; Tom Mostyn, the artist ; old Odell ; E. F. Knight, war correspondent, who left his right arm in South Africa ; S. H. Sime, the artist ; Captain E. D. Swinton ; Sir Edward Ward. No one was permitted to brag unduly, and if you could play or sing you had, when the occasion happened, to play or sing. The most regular in attendance was a member named Russell ; he had once, with a partner, taken the Haymarket for a season that proved unlucky, and some journal said it felt sure the play, in spite of adverse criticisms, was a success, because every one on leaving went up to the manager, and said, ' Thank you so much, Mr. Russell, for sending us the tickets ! '

At Bedford Street the rooms were larger and more convenient ; our landlord was a publisher who ever talked darkly of turning us out. We had a Master of Revels in George Parlby, a Director of Music in Duncan Tovey ; Sime was Director of Art, and I was Librarian. The annual dinners at Monico's

showed us at our best and smartest. Max Beerbohm spoke there more than once. Alexander Mackenzie, of the Royal Academy of Music, used to come as a guest. It is scarcely worth mentioning that at a Yorick feast I began, and was eventually lucky enough to finish, my maiden after-dinner speech.

In '03 I was elected a member of the Garrick, on the nomination of J. M. Barrie, seconded by A. E. W. Mason, and I have never wanted to join any additional club.

The ladies' clubs in London offer a good example in the way of hospitality, and men, afflicted with a conscience, are beginning to wonder whether the sternness of the rules governing their own establishments might not be usefully relaxed. Many are regulated by orders apparently laid down by the Medes and Persians. Two excellent old gentlemen (brothers) of my acquaintance used to belong, one to a club in Waterloo Place, the other to a club situated opposite. Owing to the rules then existing at each establishment the two were compelled, when they desired to meet and have a chat, to go to an Aerated Bread shop. In others, where greater freedom existed, you had to smuggle your visitor through the hall with despatch, conveying him hurriedly to a small room at the back that resembled an aquarium; the idea seemed to be that any one not a member was probably suffering from mumps, or scarlet fever. Ladies' clubs do, at any rate, know how to be entertaining. It is rumoured that their general management is sometimes defective, but perfection can seldom be encountered in this world. A new member of one had a grievance regarding food, and

was advised by a more experienced friend to write a note, and place it in the Complaint Box. Later she was encountered carrying the letter. An explanation was demanded.

‘I tried to do as you suggested,’ she replied, ‘but the box was full!’

Ladies’ clubs arrange for talking on a scale that is wholesale more than retail; each day has its debate, and if possible a reception, and no dinner is complete without a vast number of speeches. I suppose that, with them, words take the place of very fine old port.

I fancy I have entered, as a guest, most of the London clubs where visitors can be invited; there is one immense establishment in Pall Mall where, so it seems to me, any one can go in without let or hindrance, but for the rest a stranger is not likely to get past the hall porter unchallenged. How the official contrives to identify sets of features is beyond my comprehension. Once at the Queen’s Hotel at Birmingham, I arrived, without warning, from the north; as I pushed open the doors, the hall porter came forward with some letters for me.

‘Years since I stayed here,’ I exclaimed, ‘and yet you remember me!’

‘Not likely to forget a face like yours, sir!’ he answered politely.

But all people do not own unusual features, and the system of mental indexing can only be achieved by constant practice.

At the Reform, the food is excellent; at the Junior Carlton it is better. The Savile has a pleasant outlook, and this is shared by all the clubs that look across Green Park; no subscription, no entrance fee

can really be adequate for such joyous prospects. At the Athenæum the concession in regard to guests is so recent that elderly members are still inclined to scowl and glower at the stranger ; he requires all his self-assertiveness to prevent him from running out to the Duke of York's steps, and so to the Park. In most London clubs the tendency is to render it possible for a member to entertain friends in the rooms, instead of escorting them to a restaurant. Some day, I hope, they will be more gracious to pipes in the coffee-room. Pipes are forbidden in the cheaper restaurants because of an anxiety to sell cigarettes and cigars ; a club is above these mercenary notions. And I cannot recall that I have found a pipe, even in the autumn of its years, nearly so offensive as the scent from a strong and inexpensive cigar.

A man entered a suburban tobacconist's, and bought four cigars for a shilling. He asked the shopkeeper for a match.

'Pardon me, sir,' said the shopkeeper firmly, 'but one must draw the line somewhere. And I really cannot permit you to light up an article of that quality inside the shop!'

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THE formalities of approaching the lady of your heart with an offer of marriage were precise in the 'eighties, and the rules had to be observed. I think the detail of speaking first to her male parent and asking for leave to pay attentions had gone out, excepting in highly proper quarters and in short stories, but the preliminaries were deliberate as compared with the methods of to-day. Much was done by means of written correspondence ; phrases of sentiment were expected and given. Here is a specimen that gained publicity because the contract, in the end, came to nothing :

' DEAR MISS —, With the greatest possible respect I tender you my hand and heart, together with the earnest assurance that, if my offer should receive your favourable consideration, I will, in every hour of my life, devote myself exclusively to the task of making you happy. This I swear by all that is precious to me !

' *P.S.*—An answer by return post will oblige.

' *P.P.S.*—Kindly regard this as confidential.'

To-day, the proposal would be made by telephone, with all the attendant risks of making the appeal to the wrong number. There is the illuminating anecdote :

' Oh, I say, old dear. If you 're free next week, will you marry me ? '

‘Why, of course,’ answers the lady’s voice promptly.

‘Tuesday suit?’

‘Tuesday will suit splendidly. By the by, who are you?’

The circumstance that most subjects are now freely discussed by young people has sent away the fog of mysteriousness which at one time attended the ceremony; the church was a whispering gallery, and, for some reason, most of the ladies present gave way to tears. The bride’s mother invariably collapsed at the hour when the bride and bridegroom left; if she failed to do so, she was regarded as a callous-minded woman, and her conduct was the subject of talk for long afterwards. And friends in considerable numbers attended at the railway station, where the guard of the train locked the couple in a first-class compartment, and porters were rewarded liberally, and rice littered the platform, and, the express gone, all had to face the problem of occupying the remaining hours. It was counted a whole day’s job to be a guest at a wedding.

An authority of the period issued the following emotional statement:

‘The match should be arranged sufficiently long not to curtail the dear girl of one of the happiest periods of her life, and yet not long enough for hope deferred to have subdued both with waiting, and for kindly hearts to feel a qualm of commiseration at seeing them always in public meekly linked to one another.’ Despite this, I did once know a couple, middle-aged, of whom it was said that they had been engaged for seventeen years, and were still on friendly terms.

Whatever of coyness a young woman might show, there was nothing but resolute strategy on the part of her family. Her mother smiled on the applicant youth—if he was considered desirable—with persistence ; when he called, excuses were made for leaving the two young people together. At the end of the visit, the hall was at their exclusive disposal for the purpose of bidding farewell. And when, at last, he did submit his proposal, the news was carried around quickly, and the family, dropping back into naturalness said, with open satisfaction :

‘ Thank goodness, Mary ’s off ! ’

The authority just referred to laid down directions very plainly for the benefit of Mary. Here they are :

‘ She should be careful to refuse rather than encourage the assiduities of others who may seek her favour. Levity and coquettishness of manner are in the worst possible taste. Some vain, frivolous, and heartless girls delight in flirtations in these circumstances ; such do not deserve the love of a true heart.’

These difficult stages over, there came the question of costume. The bride who wished to look like a bride wore a white moiré antique dress with a long train ; a wreath of orange blossom, and Honiton lace veil that went near to the ground. The bridegroom, if he desired to be identified as the bridegroom, wore a blue frock-coat, very light trousers, very light necktie, fancy waistcoat.

At dances, the card gave quadrilles, lancers, and sometimes the caledonians ; my mother used to dance the varsoviana, and for my information and tuition she once wrote out the steps of the mazurka ;

the sheet of paper is before me at this moment, and it begins :

‘ The gentⁿ having half encircled the lady’s waist with his right arm, takes her right hand in his left, slides forward with his left foot, and hops twice on it ; then slides with right foot and hops twice on that.’

I sat down at London dinners in a transition period when one never knew for certain whether or not grace would be said. Consequently, there was an air of suspense at the beginning, and no one dared to talk ; it was a relief when the host stood up and, speaking to his shirt-front, said, ‘ For what we are about to receive, the Lord make us truly thankful ; my love,’ to his wife brusquely, at the other end of the table, ‘ is this soup intended to be hot or cold ? ’

It was impressed on you, when you went out to your first dinner parties, that you were not to talk about the quality or the merits of the food ; no one deserving the name of gentleman referred to anything like personal indisposition, recent or current ; you were always to decline at least one dish, but there was no obligation to furnish a reason.

‘ And do be careful,’ the final warning, ‘ do be careful not to monopolise the conversation.’ To-day no one thinks of doing anything else.

The rules of walking have been amended. My sisters were once told by an experienced woman—although they had not asked for the counsel—that in London two ladies might each take an arm of one gentleman, but that no lady should, on any account, take an arm of two gentlemen. And there were strict rules about the crossing of knees that

have, so far as my powers of observation go, been relaxed.

Walter Bagehot said that although Eton boys learnt but little Greek or Latin, they left school with the confident impression that there were such languages. I have known a few men who made a greater display in their conversation than this suggests ; I recall women who, born in London and brought up in London, found the English language all too insufficient for the purposes of talk, and spoke to a great extent in imperfect French. I believe you will not find many instances of the kind to-day, but peculiar methods in speech are to be discovered. Public schoolboys, whatever they know of the dead languages, swear quite fluently in those that are alive. Schoolgirls have fashions in slang which change so quickly that an idle mind cannot keep pace with them. At any dinner party you may be astonished to hear a word hitherto reckoned as one to be used only when the ladies have left the room ; the theory seems to be that no language is bad, providing it is used by the right people. Occasionally the eccentricities in speech are the result not of design but of sheer thoughtlessness. On a P. & O. boat, going out, a young man caused some distress amongst orderly travellers by the wildness and exuberance of his conversation. The day before the steamer reached Gibraltar, a middle-aged fellow-passenger remonstrated.

‘ Young man,’ he said courteously, ‘ please forgive me for making an appeal to you, but I shall be leaving the boat to-morrow, and I wish you could manage to give me and the others a respite from the violent

adjectives and nouns which you habitually use. If you could stop the practice for twenty-four hours——’

‘My dear sir,’ interrupted the youth, genuinely concerned, ‘I am most awfully sorry. I had no idea what I was doing. And I promise you this ; I ’ll take dash, blanky good care it doesn’t dash, blanky well happen again ! ’

Medical students are now demurely behaved ; the change came in with the present century. Other students engage, now and again, in a rag, and it can be observed in defence of this that it is a fairly civil war on which they engage ; only when the mature endeavour to deliver an oratorical address to them do the mature become the objectives. Colleges playing each other in football matches feel that the game is not conducted on proper lines unless all the eighteen to twenty-year-old pupils dress up in remarkable costumes, and bring to the field barbaric instruments of music ; each college has a college yell, and this is given whenever good fortune or ill fortune arrives. The elderly, looking on, may sigh regretfully ; in fairness, they should send thoughts back to their own early youth when practical jokes were regarded as the most distinguished and commendable form of humour. Reviewed now, they seem the dreariest of incidents ; generally they were cruel. The idea was to inflict them on folk—waiters, cabmen, and others—who could not repay in kind ; I expect the practical jokers were furiously nettled if any one attempted a practical joke at their expense. Sothorn was once summoned for being concerned in a particularly stupid affair of the kind ; he and Toole frightened a respectable old

gentleman named Tiffin, and the crowning point of the joke occurred when Toole produced knives from various parts of his body.

‘London,’ I was told by a contemporary of the two principals, ‘London simply rocked with laughter.’ It would appear that London, at that period, was easily amused.

The etiquette of the concert-room has altered. There were, in the ’eighties, a few entertainments where the music was followed with attention—the Philharmonic concerts, and others—but, for the most part, arrival of an instrumentalist was coincident with brisk chatter amongst the audience. In the case of At Homes, music proved a real stimulant to conversation, and any unexpected halt in the performance betrayed the fact that the discussion had no reference to the art of the performer. The change has come gradually, and to-day any one who dares to cough is frowned at by his neighbour and advised, so far as looks can give counsel, either to refrain from interrupting, or to go outside. Coughing, with an audience, is usually a sign of inattention. It breaks out in a theatre only when a dull patch occurs on the stage; it happens in church when the preacher exceeds the time limit. In concert-rooms, as I have hinted, it is simply not allowed. To exhibit indications of fatigue there would, I assume, be followed by police court proceedings at Marlborough Street.

Signs of elaborate courtesy towards womenfolk diminished when womenfolk began to smoke. So soon as a girl accepted a match from you, then

good fellowship came in, and chivalry had to make room for it. In the learning stages, she puffed with open discomfort, holding the cigarette well away from her, and ready to put it down half consumed. (I did once sit next to a lady of the theatre who, after dinner, accepted a cigar, and smoked it appreciatively to the end, but she was, in this and in other details, an unusual person.) To-day no one looks reprovingly on the girl smoker, and if anybody did I suppose she would blow the smoke into the critic's face. In certain respects, there are finer shades in the etiquette of smoking that do not influence all of us. At a restaurant lately I heard a vehement discussion between a lad and a girl at the neighbouring table.

'I call him a bounder,' said the lad doggedly, 'because he is a bounder. I'll tell you the kind of bounder he is. He has been seen—positively and actually seen—smoking a Virginian cigarette in public!' I took it that the miscreant would have escaped whipping if he had chosen a Turkish or an Egyptian.

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I AM uncertain how it is in other towns, but one can guess ; in London, there is no claim made more proudly or resolutely than that of possessing a sense of humour, and few more dangerous to deny. You can charge a man here with all the crimes, from pitch and toss to manslaughter, and he may still call you friend ; accuse him of a want of humour, and he will never borrow tobacco from you again. For the measurement, no fixed standard exists on the walls of Greenwich Observatory ; diverting judges can be found in the Law Courts, but they are rarely called upon to decide whether or not, in the disposition of anybody, this detail exists. Where a pen endeavours to transfer humour to print, decision does come, sooner or later ; the risks here are, I warn you, alarming—writing a cheerful novel is no laughing matter—for whilst pathos, being aimed, is sure to hit at some point, humour must either hit the objective in the very centre of the forehead, or score a miss.

One cannot be dogmatic about humour. There never was a joke that appealed to everybody. The most one can say is :

‘ What I think is funny *is* funny. I think ! ’

May I add that there is no use in attempting to dissect humour. The moment humour is placed on the dissecting table, it vanishes completely.

You are not likely to be affected by the represen-

tations of Cockney types sometimes given on the stage, or hinted at in cinemas. A certain extravagance appears to be necessary in these efforts ; a touch of caricature is preferred. The London costermonger was, for years, the subject of these distorting views, and the general impression, gained by those who did not know him, was amazingly incorrect. The costermonger is, for the most part, a shrewd and industrious man, quiet in his deportment, and acutely desirous of getting rid of perishable goods ere the copyright, so to say, has expired. And, in his off-duty hours, not he nor any one else in London now plays the concertina, and the only individual who wears pearlies lives in Kentish Town, and does it for a lark. The costers' womenfolk are no longer birds of a feather. They gave up the wearing of large decorations in their head-gear many a long year ago. They have a choice in colours which bears just a trifle on the side of enthusiasm, but, for the rest, they imitate, after an interval, the example set by Dover Street, West.

The humour of London has a character of its own ; a considerable amount of its reputation is due to prompt delivery. Good, bad, or mediocre, the retort is rapped out smartly, and celerity undoubtedly adds to effectiveness. It has the qualities both of pertinence and of impertinence (the second is indispensable), and it must be given with perfect assurance. The Irishman, I think, is surprised to find himself amusing, regarding it as a fortunate accident ; the Scotsman plans, organises, and his often admirable results follow thought and care ; the Londoner has such confidence in himself that he neither hesitates nor exhibits astonishment.

The inclination nowadays is to laugh at people rather than laugh with them, and the doings of simple souls give more diversion than the wit of nimble minds. The disasters of other people are always amusing, and here the Londoner's perfect belief in his own superiority comes in, encouraging him to be always on the look out for guilelessness.

The driver of the old horse omnibus, surveying town from his eminence, felt himself greatly favoured in this respect ; the fact that he carried a whip perhaps made other Londoners shy of offering the remarks that his own personal appearance sometimes invited. His reputation for originality was higher than it deserved ; the fact that he was constantly encountering crises of a similar nature to which the same verbal comments could be applied was overlooked ; moreover, it proved so easy, in writing sketches, to invent something a bus driver might have said. With the disappearance of the horse-drawn omnibus, much of the gaiety of the London streets has undoubtedly gone. The motor-man wears the look of a philosopher ; certainly he has, at inquests, the undesirable reputation of taking life as he finds it ; anyhow, he has no chance of paying attention to remarks aimed at him by those who only just escape collision with his conveyance, or answering them. For myself, I do miss the confidences of the old omnibus driver and of his colleagues. The conductor often had a grievance against a ticket inspector, or a member of his wife's family, or the deportment of a passenger from Victoria, and he never failed to tell me all about it. They were both, for one thing, legal advisers ; never better pleased than when some nice point was

submitted, always ready to give counsel's opinion ; I do not like to think of what happened in cases where their advice was followed. The laws regarding landlord and tenant had for them no secrets.

' You sue him,' they would generally say, ' that 's all you 've got to do ; sue him. Or else jolly well lock him up. Failing which, your best and wisest plan will be to push his face in ! '

In a lesser degree, they were medical advisers and political experts, with inside knowledge on both subjects denied to ordinary folk. Always ready to give the best information they possessed, there were moments when patience was subjected to unfair trials. Two American women coming on top at Trafalgar Square fired half a dozen questions at their driver before the omnibus started. ' Look here, ladies,' he said, sending his horses up the hill. ' That 's the statue of Nelson on the left ; St. Martin's Church is here on the right ; further on, we pass by the Garrick Theatre and Wyndham's, the back entrance to the Alhambra and the front of the Hippodrome ; a bit higher up, if all goes well, the Palace, and further on, unless you 're suffering from a nasty cold, you 'll tell when we go by Crosse & Blackwell's. Half-way up Tottenham Court Road, we shall see, by the 'elp of Providence, Whitfield's Tabernacle, and not much then till we get to the Cobden Statue. Higher up, the Britannia and the Adelaide, where we stop and go no further. And,' with a flick of the whip, ' this is the bus, and them's the 'orses, and I 'm the poor blooming driver, and I 've got tinned lobster for supper, and now you know pretty nigh as much about it all as what I do ! '

It was a conductor who found himself similarly tried once on coming up the steps to say, 'Westminster Abbey.' (The Londoner, economising in almost every other word, gives an extra syllable to the word Westminster.) 'Who wants Westminster Abbey?'

'I do,' replied a passenger, without moving.

'Well,' protested the conductor, 'you'll really have to come down for it; I can't very well fetch it up to you.'

A driver gave me some special and particular information behind his hand concerning the Royal Family. 'Mind you,' he said, 'you must treat this as strictly *infra dig.*; what I mean to say is, it mustn't go any further!'

It was a conductor who said to his driver on a stormy, rainy night, 'Pon me word, it makes me wish I was in 'Eaven.' The driver remarked that he, for his part, would rather be in a comfortable, well warmed public-house. 'Yes,' said the conductor, bitterly, 'you always want the best of everything!'

To my mind, the best form of London humour is that which suggests rather than describes. The Londoner can, in his happiest moments, say something that, skipping all the intervening pages, lands you at the very end of the story. He can praise or criticise by delicate implication. In a Somers Town boxing-class, I asked a sixteen-year-old boy—greatly my superior in the art—if he cared to put on the gloves with me. He turned to his neighbour and shook hands solemnly. 'If you're doing nothing on Sunday afternoon,' he said, 'come to the hospital, and bring me some flowers!' The mystic form is adopted by ladies in tenement dwellings who while

away time by discussion with neighbours, and often, in these cases, the allusion is so vague and so remote that half the annoyance is created by the fact that no one understands in the least what is meant ; these are the perils and rewards of those who talk obscurely. The fairly good-tempered chaff that goes on amongst working men is rarely utilised by their wives ; in the case of the ladies, the foils come off quickly, banter soon gives place to slander on moral character, and expressions of incredulity concerning the possession of a marriage certificate. The grounds for a dispute are easy to find ; for a woman to have no children, or to have too many, is a basis, and for her to drink, or not to drink, serves. With the more occupied sex, the sport of chipping is always open. Here again the Londoner selects the object of least resistance ; in a workshop the presence of some young countryman, slow in repartee, is a never-ending joy.

It is, of course, an unkindly sport ; there ought to be a National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to the Dull, but nearly all humour involves a certain amount of pain to somebody, and the game is, in its way, a compensation to workmen. If a colleague has some facial disfigurement, the task is easy. (You will note that the Londoner, in his desire to chaff, does not discriminate between the defects imported by nature and those which are of home manufacture.) For the rest, there is the excuse, first, of matrimonial trouble. Any man not on excellent terms with his wife, and betraying the circumstance at some incautious moment when sympathy is required, finds himself reminded of this daily, hourly, until he must regret his own effusiveness. A profoundly religious

man has also a good deal to bear, but not more than the aggressive atheist who, if his deportment be wanting in tact, can often turn the workshop into a strenuous theology class. Perhaps the most acute shafts of satire are reserved for the few of whom it is known that they take home to their respective wives on Saturday afternoon the entire amount of wages. To this subject the brightest apply their minds ; even the moderately furnished make experiments in chipping. But the cases are rare, and opportunities are hard to find. There was, at the other end of the record, the instance of Edmund of Tottenham.

Edmund had the habit of bringing home on Saturday afternoon a very small proportion of his weekly wage ; argument invariably ensued, but Edmund could stop the discussion at any moment by making a threat to end his life. On one occasion, he handed over such a trifling amount that when, tiring of the debate, he said, ' My dear, another word from you and I shall go and 'ang myself,' she retorted :

' Very well, go and 'ang yourself.'

' That,' declared Edmund, ' is a very foolish, female remark to make. For one thing, I 'aven't any rope.'

' I 'll find the rope for you,' she answered.

And this she did, and Edmund, with every indication of sulkiness, went into the back garden to hang himself.

A friend of his called within a few minutes.

' Is Edmund in, ma'am ? ' he asked.

' He is in and he isn't in,' smiled the wife, ' if you can understand that ; he 's reelly in the back yard, 'anging himself.'

‘He mustn’t do that,’ cried the friend alarmedly, ‘he owes me a pint.’

Hurrying through, he found Edmund with the knotted end of the rope around a beam of wood ; the slip knot end about his waist.

‘Whatever are you doing there?’ asked the friend.

‘I’m ’anging myself,’ said Edmund gloomily.

‘But you ain’t got it right,’ argued the friend. ‘I’ll show you how to do it. You want to get the slip knot end well around the throat, securely fastened at the neck.’

‘I tried that way,’ declared Edmund, ‘and I couldn’t ’ardly breathe!’

At the head of the London bill I am inclined to place the factory girl. To her, released from her day’s work, the town is one enormous joke. She laughs at everything, and at nearly everybody ; she makes no attempt to conceal amusement. She keeps up hilarity in circumstances that would depress most, and if she be widely read, or acquainted with the drama, her position amongst her colleagues is assured. I have never met, at the working girls’ clubs, one who could make up a story ‘out of her own head,’ as the phrase goes, but I am told of the existence of these lady novelists, gifted with wonderful powers in romance ; I have heard them describe a play and a film, and give the plot more vividly and more accurately than any dramatic critic of my acquaintance could describe it. In regard to their literary studies, these may not be either deep or high, but they keep the results in their memory in a way that may well excite envy on the part of those of

us who have reason to complain that, too frequently, our minds resemble sieves.

It is complained of the London working girl that her laugh is not silvery or musical. I admit it occasionally startles me, but when I see her engaged in monotonous occupations, one hour precisely resembling another, my surprise is not that she laughs explosively, but that she should laugh at all.

The factory girl is a critic who, at the outlying theatres, gives her views as the play progresses; virtue has no stronger friend and imperfect behaviour no greater enemy, and if the leading lady persists in compromising her fair name, it is not for want of cautionary words from the gallery. A deplorable gentleman of foreign extraction was once, at the West London Theatre, treating a blameless young woman (English) with gibes and sarcasm, and presently took a whip and threatened to strike her. A girl's voice came in level, almost regretful tones from the gallery. 'Must I,' it said, 'must I come down for you?'

The working girl goes to the variety halls; she likes the moving pictures—that extraordinary medium, all action, no words—and she comments audibly as the film is shown. 'Nice-looking young couple, and, oh—ah, ain't they in love with each other! He wants to kiss her, and he don't dare. Go on, Claude, risk it!' But when in search of real entertainment she patronises melodrama; she knows all the rules affecting melodrama, and will not allow them to be broken.

Names have to be chosen so that they may hint delicately at the character, and partially disclose it. Mary is always a good girl on the melodramatic

stage, a little silly perhaps and too trustful, but good ; Julia you will find middle-aged and, I think, unmarried ; Georgie is a tomboy, who throws things about the room and conducts herself generally with a manner of extravagant youthfulness and unbridled gaiety. Robert, on the play-bill, may not be all the austere desire, but Bob is quite right ; you can place all your confidence on Bob. May lose a little at cards, may have a glass too much in Act Three, but Bob is sound, and just the man likely to put everything right at the end. I need not warn you against any one called Jasper ; you have to be watchful in regard to Stephen ; most of all, I implore you not to be led away by the personal attractions of any lady with a French name such as Henriette, Marguerite, or Susanne ; if you are weak enough to side with these at the beginning of a play, be sure that, in due time, you will regret it bitterly.

Trifling details only are required in melodrama to enable a person to be traced by any one not in the employ of the Metropolitan police. ‘ But how shall I recognise the lady, once I reach Siberia ? ’ demanded a willing youth, in a London melodrama. ‘ Sir,’ was the reply, ‘ her hair is blacker than the raven’s wing, and her neck whiter than the driven snow ! ’ Armed with these valuable particulars, the youth set off.

Believe me, melodrama in London will never die so long as it refrains from an endeavour to be anything like real life, and so long as everything is put right at twenty minutes to eleven, with the virtuous liberally rewarded, and the criminals duly punished, unless they possess a sense of humour. Any burglar or murderer who can, at that hour, divert the

audience, is allowed to leave the court with only a slight stain on his character.

Speaking generally, one can say of London humour that it is decent ; it will strike many as not particularly deep, but the claim may be fairly made that it is not too broad. The best form is the property of the young, who are well equipped with good spirits ; I sometimes wish a portion of these could be kept in bond for use at a later stage. For the days become grim at an early period to the working Londoner ; the cheerful aspect frequently has to go, and stolidity takes the place of smile. Continuation Classes might well be started for teaching him how to laugh, after he has left school.

THERE are sights which the mature Londoner has witnessed, and will never see again. He must bear the deprivation with all the equanimity at his command.

He has not now the chance of gazing at struggling, slipping, distracted horses drawing heavy loads up an incline. (London, north of the river, makes a steady ascent ; south of the river, hills can be found.) The introduction of motor vehicles has robbed us of this spectacle ; it has lessened, too, the distribution of mud which, on appropriate occasions, used to take place. There were horses on the road which carried the stepping into a puddle to the dignity of an art ; they selected a place near to the kerb, and they invariably managed to splash the well dressed, covering them from top to toe.

The Londoner has rid himself of the trick of spitting. In clubs, years ago, it was a part of the duty of a smoke-room waiter to see that each member, on lighting a cigar, was furnished with a brass spittoon placed conveniently near ; in the roadway there was no disguise of the habit. Attempts were made to discourage it. ‘Gentlemen,’ it was said, ‘who expectorate, cannot expect to rate as gentlemen.’ Appeals were exhibited, begging folk to abstain. It was not, I think, until medical folk pointed out the danger, and public authorities began to talk of fines, that the procedure was altered, and men ascertained

how unnecessary it was to spit. I am told that even America has dropped the custom.

Any one who is enamoured of seeing inebriated people must find life, in these days, strangely empty. There was a period when the tipsy man constituted one of the best appreciated jokes. *Punch* made liberal use of him; Charles Keene used to depend on him. Drunkenness amused everybody, excepting, maybe, the wife and children of the drunkard. I walk about in London now, east, west, north, and south, and often a week goes by without an encounter with anybody who exhibits the signs of over-indulgence in alcohol. Small wonder the type has disappeared from the humorous journals. The whole incident proves that fashions in humour change. At any moment it may be decided that football referees and mothers-in-law are no longer to be reckoned as fair targets, and anything aimed at them will not be added to the score.

The alteration in drinking habits gives colour to the story of the man who applied for a situation as chucker-out at a public-house.

‘Chucker-out?’ echoed the publican, glancing moodily at his empty saloon bar. ‘I don’t want no chucker-out. What I need is a chucker-in!’

The Underground Railways made, not long since, an entreaty for sweet reasonableness, but it seemed the answer lacked enthusiasm, and perhaps the authorities were unwise to go down on one knee, and assume a piteous attitude. The Underground should set up, at a convenient place, a model of one of their stations as it was ere electricity gave a shock to steam. If the model could suggest Gower Street long before it changed its name to Euston Square,

there would be a possibility of causing the passenger of to-day to return thanks, instead of hurling back gibes. At that date, to go down the steps was to endure, on the platform and through the journey, an experience which should in justice have been reserved for those who take leave of an erratic and a naughty life. In the dense, smoke-laden atmosphere, a ghostly train came from the tunnel, and you entered a compartment where to read was impossible, and to breathe a matter of difficulty.

The Thames, in the 'eighties, was a murky, untidy river with all sorts of jetsam floating on it; discarded newspapers, planks of wood, wisps of straw, anything. True, it also had the steamers, and perhaps these will come again; I miss the opportunities for making the voyage London to Greenwich, and enjoying the picturesqueness of the lower end of the river. There was music, of sorts, on the old steamers; it seemed to be tinged with melancholy, even when a waltz was being played; for the most part the airs were 'Just a song at twilight,' or 'Daddy,' and an offertory was taken between each selection, and if you failed to drop coppers into the plush bag, the collector gave his opinion of you in the frankest terms.

The river, in showing then an aspect of disorderliness, gave a companion picture to the streets. On windy days, you had to struggle against the debris which impeded the roadways; at certain points there was a drift that rested for a while, and then set out afresh on the task of having larks with pedestrians without regard to sex.

As to the quality and behaviour of certain walkers of the streets there, any one returning to London

after a lapse of years will notice a remarkable alteration. On the south side of the Strand they appeared to claim a right of way ; two enormous women stood on guard at the entrance to Charing Cross station, and youths were accosted and hustled as they made their way to the trains. Further west, throughout the hours of day and night, there was a parade in Leicester Square, and detachments marched up and down the Haymarket, and towards Piccadilly. Later a new route was adopted that went from Bloomsbury to New Oxford Street, and along Oxford Street and then northwards. Certain licensed premises depended on the custom which these women brought ; it was not until the 'nineties that I saw the notice, 'No lady served in this bar unless accompanied by a gentleman,' and from that time on charges of harbouring were occasionally brought against publicans at the Sessions. Under the Licensing Consolidation Act of '07, the number of public-houses began to be reduced. You can often now detect in some building that has turned to the path of sober commercialism, a faint indication of its original business under the title of, say, The Crown and Anchor.

The Londoner has few opportunities of watching the homeless and the neglected who used to sleep on the Embankment or doze beneath railway arches. I fancy the Rowton lodging-houses and the similar institutions run by the County Council have helped to effect the change ; before these came, the 'Rooms for Single Men' had all the possible drawbacks, and it was natural that some folk should prefer the open air. To-day, the broken man, the man who

has seen better days, can hide himself in retirement where he will be supplied, at a trifling cost, with an adequate amount of comfort. He is treated with consideration. The manner of waking the resident who had to go to early market tasks used to be the hammering on the door of his cubicle, a system that might fail to arouse him, but assuredly disturbed every one else in the building ; the modern plan is for the night porter to go around with a feathered whisk, and, with this, he tickles and awakens the sleeper. Clothes which are too animated hang for the night in a large oven, and go through a process of baking. I was told once, at the L.C.C. lodging-house in Parker Street, Drury Lane, that the owners sometimes begrudge the detachment from lively companionship which this cleansing scheme entails.

You are spared the sight of barefooted youngsters pattering along by the side of the pavement, and keeping up a whining formula in which they had certainly been instructed by their elders. They had none of the joy of existence that you note amongst youngsters of to-day ; they were cadaverous for want of food, and much harrying had given them a furtive, suspicious look. If they sold newspapers they rent the air with screams of horrid tidings. I once saw a boy—after glancing at his placard, which had an item of storm news from America—set out at a run, bawling :

‘ Another big tornado sunk ! ’

Near Euston, on a Sunday night, came the information that Mr. Illingworth, the Chief Whip, had gone. The lad spelt out to himself the head-lines, and then shouted :

‘ Sudden death of a well-known jockey ! ’

Suicides amongst the hard-up are rarer. The decision to put an end to one's life now appears to be made chiefly by the comfortably off, who suddenly find themselves perturbed by a crumpled rose leaf ; the modern habit of drug taking has, no doubt, to take a share of the responsibility. But the folk who have sound reason to complain of the unkind ordering of fate seldom make a premature finish of their career, although the Thames is always there, waiting to take them, and enable them to forget all troubles. At river-side police stations the notices regarding ' Found Drowned ' are less numerous than they were at the time when I first became acquainted with Wapping. I fancy there is an added impression, even amongst the least fortunate, that somebody cares. There is kindness about, although it may not always be easy to discover it at the moment when need is urgent. A genuine and pathetic case mentioned in the newspapers, and hearts are touched and purses are opened, and the coroner or the magistrate suffers from a positive embarrassment of donations. Also, in London, no wide gulf separates one man from another. Every one has a neighbour. Somebody close by ; above or below.

Many have thought that the advantages of considerable wealth are few. The rich dare not eat or drink excessively ; they cannot, without attracting notice, smoke two cigars at a time ; the limitations of display in costume are, for the most part, fixed. It is in regard to travel that they gain the advantage. I would, strange as it may appear, rather journey in a first-class carriage than in a third. On a liner, I have, ere now, envied the passenger who has a state-room. When the weather is less than perfect, I

regard wistfully the folk who have a Rolls-Royce car. Here something has been done in London for the ordinary individual. On the Tube railways, distinctions of class have no place. On other lines, the thirds share, to a great extent, the comforts provided for passengers who have disbursed higher fares. Omnibuses and tram-cars are well lighted and convenient. (At a time when the windows were plastered with advertisements that acted as blinds and curtains, there was a retired clergyman who persistently attacked the companies for allowing them to impede daylight ; he was reckoned a crank, but he did manage to create a reform. One notice, inside the three-horse Hampstead omnibus, had been set up, I presume, by the deeply religious : ' The wages of sin is death, Rom. vi. 23.' Immediately underneath one read the official statement, ' Complaints regarding incivility or want of attention to be addressed to the Secretary.')

Disputes concerning fares in the public highways are occurrences of the past. Time was when alterations were frequent and, it appeared, inevitable. Fare and driver could not see eye to eye in the matter ; the process of haggling went on until a point was reached entirely unsatisfactory to both. Also, in the old days, the bilker existed, and the dread of encountering him fed gloom and sustained apprehensiveness on the side of drivers. The bilker alighted at, say, the Stores, and ordered the driver to wait ; he went through the building and out by another door, and thus escaped the formality of payment. A different method, which did not invariably succeed, was to say, on reaching the destination at night ;

‘ I have dropped a half-sovereign in the cab. Be kind enough to remain whilst I fetch a light ! ’ It was hoped that the driver, for pecuniary gain, would start his horse in the absence of the fare, to the content of the inventive fare. Cabmen were defensive when asked to take a fare to such objectives as Hampstead.

‘ A narsty sed-down ! ’ they protested. Meaning thereby that it was unlikely they would obtain a passenger for the return journey.

The hansom had speed ; I could never persuade myself it had safety, and there was always the chance that a sudden arrest on the part of the horse would shoot one over the apron and out of the conveyance. The hansom cabman was frequently a well-dressed youth, wearing a glossy silk hat, flower in button-hole of coat, a nice taste in collars. And he had quickness in speech. A beautiful but rather impecunious woman engaged a hansom at Kensington ; smart horse, smart cab, smart driver. She paid one or two morning calls, and then arrived at South Audley Street.

‘ I am here for an hour, lunching,’ she said, paying the driver, ‘ and I wish I could afford to keep you.’

‘ I was just thinking the same about you, miss,’ he remarked gallantly.

The excellent advice to make money, urged on the young, was sometimes wrongly interpreted, and the fabrication of coins resembling those produced at the Mint, but less valuable in quality, was so general that suspicious folk at counters either rang all gold or silver, or tested with the teeth. At many shops were nailed specimens of the counterfeits as a warn-

ing to those who had a thought of tendering one ; the general code of honour allowed folk to pass on a base half-crown until the circulation was stopped by some alert individual. The best coiners made their way up the ladder of progress until they manufactured five-pound notes, and then all the energies of the Bank of England were aroused in order to detect the artist. Punishments were serious. All punishments were serious in those days. There was no First Offenders Act ; youth was rewarded as heavily as maturity. Whatever the cause of the slump in coiners' dens, the risk now of accepting bad money is less than it was, and the terror of finding yourself with but one coin in the pocket, and the discovery that it could be bent by thumb and finger, is not often experienced.

Perhaps we were simpler in those days ; we must have looked simple, or the elementary frauds of the street would never have been attempted. In Tottenham Court Road, as you were gazing at the alluring card in a cheap furniture shop :

‘ You find the Girl. We do the Rest ! ’

Then would come a nudge at the elbow, and a husky voice begged you to look at an article which the owner of the voice had, he said, just found on the pavement. A gold ring ; nothing more, nothing less. And the husky man said he knew quite well he ought to take it to the police station, but, on the other hand, here was the first bit of luck he had encountered for days, and—— Anyhow, you could have it for half a crown. Eighteen pence. Ninepence. Sixpence. Oh, hang it all, the price of a pint.

Down East, by the river-side, you could not walk

far without being approached by some honest, seafaring man who had smuggled a box of cigars, and—one could understand the situation—now feared he was being watched, and would therefore let you have the box for a mere song. People, with the accents of Walworth, urged you to help them to go home to bonnie Scotland.

‘You don’t ketch me leavin’ Dublin again,’ they promised.

Sparrows, made up to look something like canaries, were offered in a mysterious way, late at night.

‘Strictly speaking,’ the would-be vendor remarked, taking pipe from mouth, ‘it belongs to my little fatherless daughter, but she won’t mind, providin’ it gets a good ’ome!’

Old ladies urged you to buy matches; they were never furnished with more than one box, and if, requiring matches, you gave coppers and took the box, they made a lachrymose protest, as though you were robbing them of their only means of livelihood. In higher circles there were—maybe there are to-day—ingratiating men with admirable manners, full of cheery talk with each other, and ever watching out of the corner of an eye for some youth, slightly bemused for preference, who would be overjoyed to be taken to a house off Great Portland Street for a quiet game of cards. With the aid of a companion, I once interposed in a situation of the kind; the ingratiating man showed an entire change of deportment, but his behaviour was genteel as compared with the vehement indignation of the poor young fool. It is a nice point; how far ought the law to meddle in a case where the pigeon is being plucked, and wants to be plucked? He is bound

to lose his feathers, in the end. In the case referred to, I stepped in only because I knew the boy's mother. The world is hard on good mothers who have foolish sons.

Per contra, as they write in City offices, there was a leisureliness in town life that has almost entirely gone. One man thought it sufficient if he had one job. Nobody had the immense number of daily engagements that some now pile up. Folk went through their work and made no hectic, feverish display in doing it. Even shop windows were dignified, and wine merchants did not send out the kind of circular that has just reached me, headed 'Indescribably Reckless Sale of Marvellous Beverages.'

I am inclined to believe that in the 'eighties and the 'nineties, few Society women engaged the services of a press agent.

A NEW red ball came from a mighty hit at Lord's ; it bounced from the roof of the hotel and fell into St. John's Wood Road. A young postman, riding a bicycle, jumped off, snatched at the ball, put it in his pocket, and rode away. This was not exactly cricket, but I have seldom come across an act so likely to be followed by nothing like remorse or self-denunciation.

A far earlier incident in the game occurred when, as a very little boy, I was taken by an elder brother to Canterbury on an afternoon in the cricket week. Lord Someone was playing in one of the teams, and this in itself was sufficient to put a keen edge on curiosity ; he proved to be wearing a silk shirt, and this augured well. Unfortunately, he was bowled first ball, and, still more unluckily, he so far lost his temper as to throw down his bat—a professional was sent out to do the service of retrieving it—and walk off to sulk in the tent. A harder-working bat was exhibited, in modern days, at a fascinating shop window near the Borough. The inscription said :

‘ 3000 runs with this.

Gilbert Jessop.’

Gilbert Jessop was once a guest at the annual dinner of Men of Kent and Kentish Men, and he had indeed a good right to be present. His team, Gloucestershire, had that year to play Yorkshire

when Yorkshire and Kent were close neighbours at the head of the table. Jessop, as time became short, put himself on to bowl, took the last Yorkshire wickets, and the Championship came to Kent. I had to propose his health, and I suggested that out of mere gratitude all male babies born in Kent until the end of the year should be given the Christian names of Gilbert Jessop. Oddly enough, I heard a while since from a young man signing himself G. J. Mainwaring who informed me that his parents, when he arrived, adopted the hint.

Jessop at the wicket was good, but variable ; Jessop in the field was better, and never failed. The runs he saved ! The catches he took ! Always an example of alertness, and ever a pattern of activity. I think it was Alec Bannerman who once said to a youth :

‘ If you ’re here to play cricket, man, play cricket, but for Heaven’s sake, don’t whistle comic songs in the slips ! ’

Jessop could not, at any period in his career, have been charged with this horrid offence. I have rarely seen a player give so much of what Henry James would have described as the concentrated essence of attention.

Because I was, in my undistinguished cricket days, left-handed at the wicket, it has been natural to give a special interest to the players who, by reason of this odd gift, compel the field to change places. H. T. Hewett, of Somerset, was one of the heftiest of all left-handers ; I came to know him when his golden hours were past, and he had grown heavy in figure, rather caustic but very entertaining in speech. In one innings at Taunton he three times

hit the ball over the church that stands just outside the ground.

The most poignant heart-cry ever given on the cricket field must have been the one uttered during a game in Australia. A high catch was offered to Maclaren, who waited for it calmly.

‘Miss it, Archie,’ cried a voice appealingly, ‘and I’ll let you kiss my sister!’

The rewards of players are not always so conspicuous, but a benefit is occasionally given to a professional, and ere now a handsome amount has accrued from it. There were days at the Oval in the ‘eighties when, if a player made a good score, a collection around the ground was immediately started, encouraged and aided by Craig, the Surrey poet. We always bought verses from Craig, not so much on account of their quality in rhyme, as because the writer was a good-tempered chap, ever in touch with events, and able to disclose any alteration in the going-in list. There was a generous consumption of beer at the Oval in those days, and, as a result, argument sometimes ensued between lookers-on; I once saw two men take off jackets in order to fight. They made up the quarrel on discovering that they had been talking of different players.

All my happiest thoughts of cricket in recent years are associated with Lord’s. The influence is discovered immediately one reaches the neighbourhood of the ground. In Maida Vale, on the afternoon of a good match, people are hurrying joyously towards St. John’s Wood Road; none take any notice of Hamilton Terrace, broad as it is, or of Grove End Road; they increase speed for fear

of missing some delightful incident in the game. A comfortable seat taken, all the anxieties of the outside world have disappeared ; there is the wide green space, restful to the eyes ; stolid white-coated umpires walk out, after lunch, and set the bails on ; the fielding team comes, and the two batsmen stroll towards the wicket. The rest, for me, is pure contentment. Whether the hitting be aggressive or cautious, I like it all. Legal folk, I notice, invariably give way to slumber at Lord's ; it may be that their morning's work has been more arduous than mine. Schoolboys and schoolgirls are particularly wideawake ; the young women are now as keen on the game as their brothers, and their memory of past scores is something to be envied.

A journal, with the happy notion of obtaining an economical column, asked several of us not long since to describe the ideal holiday. My own answer was, ' Watching Mr. Mann hit sixes at Lord's.' I expect I had in mind the truly glorious afternoon when Mann came out to bat, and in his first over hit a six, two fours, and a two. Altogether he made 53 in eighteen minutes. The pavilion shook with excitement. Bench and Bar woke up. The mound shouted itself to the point of huskiness. Policemen took off their helmets and fanned themselves.

London may never again see an innings like it.

W. G. was the idol in my youth, and no one else was allowed to share the adoration. I saw him play part of an innings of 344 at Canterbury, and although the score was made against our county, my brother and I danced the whole way home. One Kentish player we specially admired was W. W. Rodgers of

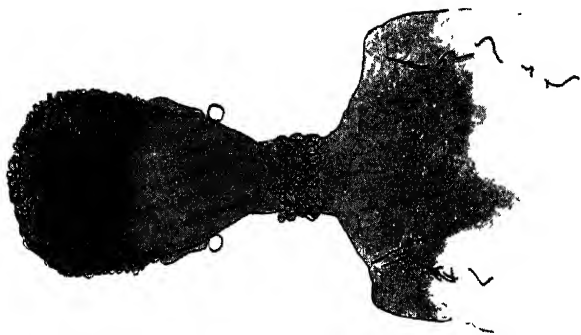
Hadlow Castle. At school, I was called out at the last moment—the emergency must have been urgent—to play in the Marden team against Hadlow. W. W. Rodgers batted magnificently, and at lunch time was not out for a good score. The gentleman farmer who provided the meal recommended him to try some very fine cider that had long been kept in an old rum cask ; Rodgers took a couple of tumblers of the remarkable beverage, slept soundly throughout the afternoon, and we won the game. Drink is, as you know, a terrible curse, but, properly directed, it can be made to work for good.

George Lohmann, of Surrey, held, in his day, the affection of the Kennington people.

‘He puts brain into the ball,’ they said.

Lohmann had what was called the telescopic arm, and he always seemed to bowl just a shade better than any one expected. Also he did remarkable work at cover slip. He died of consumption, and he lies buried out in South Africa, near Bloemfontein, but his memory will ever, at the Oval, be treasured.

Middlesex has always been fortunate in its captains, and P. F. Warner gave of his best to the county. It was a real delight to see his well-worn cap at the steps of the pavilion ; every one knew that something would happen so soon as Warner had been given the middle by the umpire. During his most eventful period he rarely took long to play himself in ; the fun began immediately. Only in South Africa did he fail, and there the googly bowlers were responsible. Being himself a writer, he arranged a finish to his career, after thirteen years of captaincy, that might well have



JUNE THE THIRTEENTH

1907

According to STARR WOOD



been invented by a novelist. (You were there, I expect.)

Half-past four on an August afternoon with the scores like this :

Middlesex 268 and 316 declared.

Surrey 341 declared, and 78 for two wickets.

Every one saying the match would end in a draw, and how would it be to see about starting for home. After all, contended the restless, one could read about it in the morning newspaper. At twenty past six, thanks mainly to Stevens's bowling, Surrey was all out second innings ; the crowd threw hats in the air, as the only way of showing their joy over the fact that Middlesex had once more gained the Championship, and Warner, speaking from the pavilion, declared he was the happiest man alive.

That was a notable game at the Rectory Field, Blackheath, when Kent in its July game with Surrey made 349 in the first innings, with seven batsmen scoring double figures. This happened on the first day. The second day, Surrey, on a rather dusty wicket, made 488 for seven, with Hayward and Hobbs each on the card for 122, and D. J. Knight for 105. On the third day, rain came on at five o'clock, and the match ended in a draw. Blythe, of Kent, was at the top of the bowling averages that year. On the Monday, Germany invaded Belgium ; cricket was stopped, and Blythe was amongst those who never came back to the field.

Three county matches were abandoned that season owing to the war.

The old method of showing a compliment to a professional was to offer beer ; the current way is to ask for his autograph. The autograph market at Lord's seems to be as delicate as any financial speculation in Throgmorton Street. Hendren makes (say) 102 in the first innings for Middlesex ; he has to struggle through the crowd of boys and girls, and at the lunch interval he scarcely dares to show his face.

' Oh, please, Mr. Hendren, can you be so very kind——' Pencil and book offered.

In the second innings, Hendren makes 3, and is caught in the slips. He is able, on this, to stroll around without any sort of impediment or interruption. ' Slump in Hendrens ' is, likely enough, the way they put it in the autograph world. The collectors who terrify me are the folk who send, by post, a volume of important signatures—royalties, actors, boxing men—with a request that I will add another name ; the sense of responsibility is so great that I can do nothing until, packing it up in brown paper, I have given the valuable tome into the hands of the Post Office. And I do not greatly love the young woman who encloses six slips on each of which you are to inscribe your name ; it looks to the apprehensive mind as though she were engaged in the wholesale trade. Novelists, glad in an ordinary way to have these tributes of recognition, may well feel envious of the people, like cricketers, to whom praise is instantly and generously awarded when the moment for giving it arrives. The occasions cannot happen frequently in a lifetime, but when they do come along they are surely very precious ; at any rate they compensate for the adverse criticism now

and again and here and there—but not at Lord's—shouted at the player. The comment on an admirably-mannered West End actor of a past generation—'He doesn't act; he behaves!'—this can be said, in a more flattering sense, of Lord's. I have seen noisy, clamorous youths come out of the Metropolitan station. In walking along to the turnstiles they talk and sing uproariously. Once inside, the calm of the place, and the decorous behaviour of every one else, make an instant impression; within five minutes the youths are chatting in undertones.

The advanced interest of London in football during recent years is perhaps the most astonishing change that has happened in games. I was years ago staggered on witnessing for the first time the exodus from a northern town on a Saturday afternoon in the direction of a football match; a scene of the kind can be observed now during winter in any quarter of London. Even more remarkable is the adoption of the game by small villages in the home counties; football must have robbed the season in these districts of a deal of its old monotony and gloom. The weekly records say that Paddock Wood played Hawkhurst, and East Farleigh played Linton; I doubt if, in the 'eighties, these places knew that the game existed. And in London the popularity of football can be guessed, not only by the attendance at the matches, but by the conversation of youth. There are, in the early spring, London houses which you do not dare to enter until you have ascertained the exact position of the Spurs in the First Division table; the most trifling error in statement, and sons of the household will never speak to you again; daughters will be highly

diverted by your blunder. The returning crowd along Fulham Road after a match is typical of all other Saturday afternoon crowds. A little singing of an exultant character ; a playing of the match over again in argument (as with bridge folk), a certain resignation, with the consoling phrase of :

‘ Ah, well. I suppose the losers did their best ! ’

A queer thing, football patriotism. The Millwall team plays at New Cross ; its players are obtained in bargain sales all over the country, and some enthusiast at Ealing is not really content unless Millwall gains more matches than it plays, whilst his wife, born at Camberwell, would very much like to see Burnley win the cup. I do not affect to understand it. With cricket, the prejudice is always in favour of the county of birth, or county of adoption, and a southerner would feel that he was likely to be shot at dawn if he were to say that he hoped the Championship might go to Yorkshire. Football has an advantage which appeals to many in the limitations of time. Lookers-on know exactly when the struggle will finish ; a cricket match may last three days, and then furnish nothing decisive. And certainly on a London football ground, in the second half of the game and the teams equally matched, and the growing dusk of winter coming on until you can see when a lucifer is struck on the opposite side of the field ; then, in hoping for a goal that will mean everything, there is a thrill and an eagerness which few other games supply.

Games in the London streets have their seasons ; they come and they go. Finding a want of public playgrounds, the London child long ago staked out a claim on the London pavements, and this has

existed for so many years now that it has become indisputable. A sweet reasonableness has always been exhibited. Certainly I have observed youngsters playing on the pavement in New Bond Street, but not until the stress of the day's traffic was over ; there are busy thoroughfares where they have apparently agreed to waive their rights ; in return, mature people have recognised that in the minor streets, when sport is in progress, it is not for them to interfere.

In some countries mystic chalk signs on the flagstones would be interpreted to mean that a secret society was at work ; here they generally mean that a game of hop-scotch has been played. You know the rules and regulations of hop-scotch, I am sure, although, on grounds of dignity or convenience, you may have relinquished games that necessitate a hopping on one foot. On a stretch of pavement is drawn a parallelogram ; this is divided into four spaces, which are numbered ; a smooth piece of stone is produced from the pocket of some sportsman (which pocket contains a variety of articles suggesting that the owner is prepared at any moment to be wrecked on a desert island), and the task is to use one foot only, and to send the flat stone in a move from number one space to the next, to return from number four, to effect other ingenious moves, to do 'hard labours,' to score a 'whirly,' and to prove yourself generally more clever than your fellows.

Have you seen the game called London ? You will find on the pavement sometimes a diagram showing that London has been played ; a sketch of an arched doorway, between the numbered horizontal lines have been scored a cross, a head, a body,

legs, a gun, and six bullets. If you observe forgotten head-gear lying about, it means that a game of egg caps has been in progress. Cloth caps ranged side by side, and if the ball on being lobbed goes three times into one boy's cap, and three times he fails to hit one of the others with the ball (the score registered by bits of paper placed there), he is held to have three bad eggs to his discredit, and he is out ; there is possibility of respite if, moving his hand in semaphore fashion against a wall, he escape the ball thrown by the winner ; this last chance is called clockworks.

The game of marbles seems to have altered out of recognition. I once possessed a green baize bag, corpulent with its contents, but I suppose that, like many gamblers, I did not know when to stop ; at any rate my balance at the marble bank is exhausted, and I could not at the present moment put my hand on a single alley of glass, or of stone. We used to make a cup in the earth against a wall ; one boy pitched a handful of marbles in, and the other boy cried ' Odds ! ' or ' Evens ! ' just as omens or his own intelligence prompted ; there was another form which more nearly resembled the game of to-day. Strictly speaking, it is not a pavement game, for it is played in the gutter, but that is near enough. Several boys can play it at a time, and it has one of the few advantages of golf in that it insists on pedestrian exercise. One boy sends a marble down the dry gutter, the next aims at it, and if the second player hits it the marble is his. There is here a fine touch of sympathy with the unlucky player ; should a sportsman lose four marbles he gets an allowance of one marble from the player who has accumulated

the largest capital. The game of flip, played with cigarette pictures, is on similar lines.

Tip-cat was a game that, in its season, forced itself on the eyes of the people. The small piece of wood, sharpened at both ends, came whizzing through the air, and nervous folk took cover ; a safe game for the players, whose aim it was to strike hard. I have an idea that this was a favourite sport with the sons of glaziers. Girls played it at times, but in the best circles of Walworth it was not looked upon as a ladylike game. On the other hand, skipping was entirely reserved for the fair sex, and no boy proved so unmanly as to interfere. An iron railing and a piece of rope attached will still keep two small girls happy for hours at a time ; played with more elaboration it offers good fun for a dozen. The rope, with a lady at either end, goes round as each damsel steps forward in turn to try her skill and tempt her luck, a dirge being chanted by the others :

*' My cup and saucer must pass over my 'ead,
My cup and saucer must pass under my foot ! '*

It having occurred to youthful minds that lamp-posts must have been erected for some good reason, they, by getting a boy who is going to be a sailor to attach a rope near the top, make a good but perilous game of swinging around the lamp-post, and any passer-by who, absorbed in thought as he walks, is suddenly struck by a flying body, can tell, if he be an intelligent person, and one able to put two and two together and make the result four, that he has been getting in the way. I heard the other evening a revolving little girl sing ' Onward, Christian Soldiers ' as she swung around, but the melody is,

I believe, entirely a matter for personal taste and selection.

Hoops can be propelled with the aid of a stick, but this is a barbarous custom ; the refined way is to use an iron skidder, by the aid of which the hoop can be kept on the run, and can be arrested when risk of collision appears. Peg-tops also come under the heading of inexpensive sports open to both sexes ; the whipping top is a variant. The dexterous can wet the string and pull it around tightly, fling it with a sharp jerk following, and the content of a boy or girl who, having scooped up the spinning top neatly on to the palm of the hand, watches it, is something that I have rarely seen on the face of the President of the Royal Academy, never on the features of a Prime Minister ; a sigh of half-regret at the present, but entire satisfaction with the past, comes when the top begins to show signs of exhaustion, and finally, after some helpless wriggling, falls limply. Gully-hole is the popular game in this connection. In spinning tops, as in more ambitious efforts of maturer life, the fun really comes in the knowledge that you have never finished the work of trying to achieve perfection.

A game of the pavement, admirable, as hostesses say, for bringing people together, and in the same school with leap-frog and foot-it, was called by so many names that to mention one might not help you to identify ; to mention all would only confuse. But you know it. One boy puts the top of his head against the wall ; three others make a bridge from him by tucking in their heads. The attacking party endeavour to break down this temporary pontoon, and each in turn takes a run and jumps heavily on

the point of least resistance ; the bridge boy has to sustain the load if he can whilst the others sing :

*' Jump a little nag's tail,
One, two, three,
Jump a little nag's tail,
One, two, three.
Off, off, warning !
Charley Eccles—one, two, three,
Charley Eccles—one, two, three.
All over ! '*

Or other words to the same rhythm. A great game ; I wish grown-up people were allowed to play it. One can see possibilities of an excellent match of Authors *v.* Critics.

There are three-and-forty games of the pavement, many of them games with buttons ; most are played in various ways, and I cannot bother you with all, but Sunday-Monday must not be forgotten. Sunday-Monday is a good ball game, requiring only a blank wall and enough boys to choose each one day of the week, so that the thrower, on sending the ball, can shout the name of the day, and give the boy responsible a chance of catching it on the rebound.

Football was sometimes played on the pavement, or near to it, with an empty salmon tin, but the great pavement game was always cricket. I have in the past seen exciting cricket in a cul-de-sac in Bermondsey ; I have heard disputes there, and this has been owing partly to the absence of umpires, mainly to the conditions under which the game was played. When the wickets were but three upright chalk lines on the blank wall ; when the ball was the property of a sensitive youngster, who would

take it away the moment anything was said or done to ruffle his temper ; when the bat was similarly the possession of a lad who could stop the match at any point—then it can be understood that there were great chances of contention, and that few games were played to a finish.

It was considered unmanly to allow girls to take part in these sports, and the young women, for the most part, arranged their own diversions. What the small girl liked best was a game of pretending.

‘ I ’ll be the schoolmistress, standing ’ere, and you be the children standing on the edge of the pavement,’ was the usual suggestion. ‘ Now, how is it you ’re late again ? ’

‘ Please, teacher——’

‘ I won’t listen to a word. You ’ll simply lose your mark, that ’s all.’

Simulation of tears on the part of student.

‘ Tell me now, Minnie Gibson—and leave your nose alone, miss—who was John the Baptist ? ’

‘ Please, teacher, he was a gentleman whose name was John, and he was called the Baptist because—because——’

‘ Well, my girl, why was he called the Baptist ? ’

‘ Please, teacher, he had to have a nickname of some kind.’

‘ Girls, see who can tell me first when Queen Victoria——’

‘ Eighteen fifteen.’

‘ Quite right ; very good answer. Now, children, in regard to arithmetic. Three times three ? Don’t all speak at once, and think before you give the answer. Minnie Gibson, I shan’t take the trouble to speak to you again. The next time——’

Playing at shops gave fine opportunities for acting. Generally it was a draper's, sometimes a grocer's ; the best entertainment was to be found in the dressmaker's, with young mites coming to be fitted on with imaginary garments for summer wear. Here was all the joy that Mount Street knows, with the added luxury of a haggling about price ; small customer declaring that she could get a skirt made for 1s. 3d. less by a lady in the next street, and the dressmaker, indignant, bidding her take her custom elsewhere. Thanks to the schools, you may now see the children of the streets playing the old English games, of which their parents never heard. ' There came three dukes a-riding,' and the arch game, with :

*' Quite good enough for you, sir,
For you, sir,
For you, sir.
Quite good enough for you, sir,
Ta-ranty-rantity-ray ! '*

These are plays in themselves, and nothing pleases a child so much as the opportunity for pretending it is somebody else and somebody important ; a few of us are unable to get rid of this even when we grow up.

For the young ladies, too, are reserved the pleasures of the dance. A piano-organ draws up near to the kerb, and the insistent, definitely marked melody that in places gives annoyance, here, in a minor street, furnishes a pure delight. The London girl is a born dancer ; it is this exercise, I do believe, that keeps her well, and keeps her happy.

Diabolo was played in '07, and given up, for some reason, or for no reason at all, immediately. You find it now only in odd corners with the easy outfit

of a piece of string on two sticks and an exhausted cotton reel.

Youth is not all it is cracked up to be ; it has many drawbacks that do not affect maturity. Some talk as though youth were such a joke that the rest of their lives has to be devoted to bewailing its disappearance. But a joke you cannot see at the time is not really a good joke, and, as a matter of fact, the amusements of the youngsters in our streets are all too rare. For which reason I know you will not mind the trouble, when in London, of stepping aside in order to avoid interfering with games of the pavement.

OF all the men with whom I have worked in social affairs Thomas Holmes was the shrewdest, the most reliable. Many were acquainted with him through his books—*Pictures and Problems from London Police Courts* and *London's Underworld*, and *Known to the Police*, and others—and no one could fail to be impressed by his complete sincerity. He had been a court missionary, and, this over, he founded the Home Workers' Aid Association. It was in the days of sweating, and before Trade Boards were started, and Thomas Holmes managed to interest people, far and near, in the lot of these elderly women, living alone and working in solitude, and often without a relative or a friend. Immediately that he had stated their case, offers of help came in. 'We are full of trouble out here,' wrote a member of the Legislative Assembly of Natal, 'and we have our own sorrows, but I send you a draft for £25 to make some of these women happier.' Letters arrived from Australia. He gave a widow's balance-sheet showing the disbursement of her last shilling :

Tea, a halfpenny.
Sugar, a halfpenny.
Bread, one penny three farthings.
Margarine, one penny.
Oil, one penny.
Firewood, a halfpenny.
Bacon, sixpence three farthings.

And, within two or three days, sixteen hundred letters arrived from good-natured folk. Discovering that the women never took a holiday, he started a Holiday Home for them at Walton on Naze. Now there is a splendid building at Walton for their comfort in the months of summer, and forty women at a time come to it, tired and jaded with years of monotonous industry, and during the fortnight of holiday, they enjoy clean air, good food, neat rooms, and the rare joy of having nothing to do. Small pensions are given by the Association. There are special gifts at Christmas.

He described a warren of dwellings in the East End, which he called The Bastille. In the East End Bastille the conditions were infinitely worse than those existing with its French predecessor and namesake, and Thomas Holmes spoke of it, and wrote of it, with indignation. Two hundred and fifty families lived there in surroundings which, as he remarked, 'were a disgrace to our civilisation, and a condemnation of our humanity.' An impetuous Bishop announced that The Bastille did not exist. Whereupon Thomas Holmes took the London County Council doctor to the place; the two went all over it, and as a consequence it became marked on the L.C.C. map as an insanitary area. The Bishop happened to be wrong; Thomas Holmes was right. He had a knack of being right. He was never so precisely exact as in his management of the Home Workers' Aid Association, and in his various plans for improving the lot of the members. We lost him in '18, and those of us who had long been connected with the Association determined, at once, that the best tribute we could pay to his dear

memory was to carry along the task on the lines which he had laid down.

It was at Walton that he pointed out to me an aged member of the Association taking the first holiday which had come her way for forty years. She sat on the cliff, gazing out at the waters. As she sat there, her hands were automatically going through the movements of box-making that occupied the normal days of her life.

In a decorous magazine, conducted by an excellent woman, there used to be a page devoted to the subjects of love, courtship, and marriage; advice was given to any one suffering perplexity in these matters. A reply to Eager Ethel was brief and decided :

‘ There are other ways of serving the Lord than by marrying a black man ! ’

For myself, with so much missionary work to be done at home, I have never been able to feel acutely interested in other races; London hospitals and London prisons alone are enough to engage one’s spare time, and educational movements can fill odd half-hours. I have, for years, been a governor of City of London College in Moorfields, where Sir Edward Clarke is still held in affectionate memory as the most distinguished student; I am one of the committee of East London College, to which the Drapers’ Company gives so much support; I am a member of the Working Men’s College in St. Pancras. The Working Men’s College was opened in the ’fifties by Thomas Hughes, J. M. Ludlow, Frederick Denison Maurice, F. J. Furnivall, and others, and at the start it was announced that

‘every member is to have perfect freedom of action. He is to do exactly as he pleases. And if he does not, he will be forced to do so.’ Dr. Furnivall used to attend the annual suppers in the early part of the present century ; a bearded, handsome old man, with a provocative method of speech that accounted for some of the public broils in which he had been concerned. He had his own rules in spelling :

‘We all lookt up to him,’ he wrote. And
‘We helpt one another.’

General Maurice has recently succeeded Sir Charles Lucas as Principal of the College. I ought to have mentioned Sir Charles’s name in alluding to the best public speakers of the day.

In ’07, Sir William Treloar was Lord Mayor of London, and on an afternoon in June of that year Queen Alexandra visited the Mansion House to open a fête in aid of the Cripples’ Fund. Sir William had asked me to compile a souvenir book, and I handed to Her Majesty a volume containing the original drawings and the original manuscripts. Amongst the writing men good enough to help me with the book were Jerome K. Jerome, H. G. Wells, W. W. Jacobs, J. J. Bell, Harold Begbie, E. V. Lucas, Barry Pain, G. K. Chesterton, Max Beer-bohm, Louis N. Parker, Adrian Ross, Keble Howard, and Henry Arthur Jones ; the artists were Starr Wood, W. Heath Robinson, A. S. Boyd, Lawson Wood, Cecil Aldin, Will Owen, Ralph Cleaver, John Hassall, Lewis Baumer, and Fred Pegram. A total amount of £12,000 was realised by the fête, and ‘The Lord Mayor Treloar Cripples’ Hospital and

College ' started at Alton ; in '19, the seaside branch was opened at Sandy Point in Hayling Island.

The success of the undertaking has been truly amazing. In my experience, I have never found anything like it. During all its fourteen years of activity the scheme has been wonderfully and increasingly triumphant. Sir Henry Gauvain, the Medical Superintendent, writing in the *Times*, has paid his tribute to the sun, fresh air, and pure sea water for help in the marvellous cures effected in the cases of surgical tuberculosis ; here I wish to impress the circumstance that the beginning was due to Sir William Treloar's generous and sympathetic heart, and that advance has been made possible only by his wise, business-like management. His attention has never flagged. Many of us, in the Squeers's establishments of life, can spell window ; few of us go and clean it. So many of us say of problems that something ought to be done, and, having said this, we go home comfortably to dinner. Sir William, once he had gathered about him the best people for the job, did not hamper them with interference or continual advice, but made it his task to obtain the funds necessary for the carrying out of the plan. In his first appeal, sent through the journals of the day, he wrote :

' The institution which I am advised is urgently needed will not displace a single existing agency ; it will not compete with the hospital, convalescent or holiday home, or special school ; nevertheless it may necessarily partake of the character of each.'

To-day, folk engaged on research come to Alton from all parts of the world to investigate procedure,

and to borrow ideas, and Alton itself is ever eager to take advantage of new discoveries affecting the beautiful work to which it is devoted. Sir William Treloar has contrived that when money is required for deliberate and expensive treatment, then money is forthcoming ; it is enough to say that his confidence in the generosity of the nation has proved itself fully justified. By his own personality, and by his own charm and inspiration, he collects many thousands each year, and every shilling is laid out with the aim of preventing tuberculous children from becoming incurable members of the army of cripples. At Alton and Hayling Island this happy result, in ninety-seven cases out of a hundred, is achieved. Well over three thousand little patients have been treated since the opening. If ever there was a reason to thank Heaven on bended knees, it is here.

I hope my pen, such as it is, has always been at Sir William's disposal. I am guilty of no overstatement when I declare that he is the best and dearest man I ever met.

The spirit of management in His Majesty's prisons, as I have mentioned already, has changed in recent years, and it is agreeable to take a share, however trifling, in the new departure. The old methods of sternness have gone ; an endeavour is now being made to see what can be done by gentleness. I find that, for the most part, young men—and I am mainly interested in those who are called Juvenile Adults—come into prison as a consequence of unemployment. Being, in their own phrase, down and out, they steal an unattended bicycle, or they become the tempor-

ary owners of something from a van. Rarely do you hear that drink is responsible. The old convenient theory that crime was the result of drink must be given up. A youth did blame it the other day for his arrest for house-breaking; he explained to me that if he had not been the worse for liquor at the time he would have been able to make his escape.

For the most part, those in prison are remarkably like ourselves; some with an intelligence that is superior, and some less adequately furnished. We can never be thankful enough for our own mediocrity.

At Pentonville there is a debating class. A discussion was held this year on the subject, 'That male friendship is to be preferred to the friendship of women.' One of the debaters said he liked the friendship of women; unfortunately, it was always so expensive.

I was with Father Stanton of St. Alban's, Holborn, on a small committee that assisted a lads' hostel; he had a serenity of manner that could not easily be reconciled with the energy he had shown in the old fighting days when High Churchmen were attacked. One of his stories concerned a woman who called at his house late at night; the housekeeper brought a message to the effect that the visit was of an urgent nature.

'Tell her,' directed Stanton, 'to go away and call again to-morrow at a reasonable hour.'

The housekeeper came once more and announced that the woman desired to see Father Stanton in regard to her immortal soul. 'Show her up to this room,' he said reluctantly.

For half an hour the visitor explained the difficulties

of religious thought and behaviour in which she found herself. The best advice was tendered, and she prepared to go.

‘By the by, Father,’ she remarked, ‘I suppose you haven’t a pair of old trousers to spare for my husband?’

‘I have a pair of old trousers,’ answered Stanton. ‘I am wearing them at the present time, and I am not willing to give them up to your husband, or to anybody!’

On Appeal Committees I have been so fortunate as to gain the co-operation of Lady Northcliffe (now Lady Hudson), and her help secured a publicity that my writing could not otherwise have obtained. Publicity is useful in these matters. Mme. Réjane once expressed a desire to pay a quiet visit to The Babies’ Home at Hoxton, and, to my content, she was thoughtful enough to come along with six pressmen and three photographers. This is the way to escape non-recognition. At one time coyness was shown in high quarters in regard to press notice; it has disappeared. Not long ago a royal lady went to South-east London to visit an Infant Welfare Centre. A baby handed over a small bouquet, and the visitor had begun a tour of the house when two press photographers arrived breathlessly.

‘Ma’am,’ said one, hat off, ‘there has been a small ceremony which we have missed. Be so kind as to go through it again.’ The baby, by royal direction, found, the bouquet was tendered once more; the cameras clicked.

Despite all the assistance of public journals, there are folk who remain unmoved and aloof where great

names are concerned. Some one made the acquaintance of Humphry Ward, art critic of the *Times*, on a railway journey. Cards were exchanged. A letter followed, with an invitation to dinner.

‘By the by,’ in a postscript, ‘if there is a Mrs Humphry Ward, bring her along, please!’

My closest and longest connection with hospital life was during the war, when the Red Cross people asked me to take the congenial duties of honorary librarian in the Third London General at Wandsworth. Men were, I think, glad to look in at the library to have a chat, and to browse amongst the volumes; beyond this, each ward had a book-case, and the task of renewing the contents was one which did not finish until some time after the armistice. A young Irishman who had been seriously damaged in France told me he was one of the resolute Sinn Feiners who had decided to fight for England; before he went back to Ireland, he gave me these lines:

‘I have a shawl and every fold
Is trimmed with the colours of green and gold.
The loveliest shawl you ever saw
I wear it in spite of Martial Law.
But over its folds at night I weep
When I pray for the men who fought to keep
Its colours flying in Ireland free
And bled and died for Liberty.’

Lighter incidents happened. A distinguished lady who suffered from deafness called one afternoon, and put the usual questions to a wounded patient.

‘Are you badly hurt, my good man?’

‘Pretty bad.’

‘And you are, I hope, getting better?’

‘ I ’m no worse.’

‘ And I am sure that when you are well again, you will be eager to go back and fight once more for your beloved country.’

‘ Be hanged if I shall ! ’ he murmured.

‘ Ah,’ said the deaf lady, passing on affably to the next bed, ‘ all our brave fellows say that ! ’

Concerts and entertainments were given almost every afternoon and night. In a corridor I met a patient who was wheeling himself, with a mournful air, in the direction of the concert-room ; as he passed, he said :

‘ Wish I ’d got shell shock ! ’

The remark puzzled me at the time. Later I found that men who had shell shock were exempted from attending the entertainments.

A man asked me for *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, and I promised to obtain it. He mentioned that he once borrowed it, started to read, and some one pinched it.

‘ That was fifteen year ago,’ he added.

‘ You have read plenty of books since then ? ’ I suggested.

‘ No,’ he said, ‘ it was the only one I ever in my life tackled ! ’

Other men were more energetic in their reading. Mrs. Rudyard Kipling sent me a large case filled with copies of her husband’s books. I distributed them amongst the cases in the various wards, and, in going round on the following day, I noticed that every book had been taken out, and was being read.

Miss Beatrice Harraden, who ran the library at the Military Hospital, used to declare that she could tell, immediately an applicant looked in, whether he

was a Nat Gould or a Charles Garvice ; these two novelists certainly had an enormous popularity. Miss Harraden had an experience once with a north countryman who had been out, on leave, for the afternoon ; he had taken enough refreshment to create frankness in speech.

‘ Is it a fact, miss,’ he asked, ‘ that you yourself write some of these books that are stacked away here ? ’ Miss Harraden answered that she was responsible for two or three. ‘ I want you to understand this,’ he went on heavily. ‘ ’Tis all very well for you people to sit down and write books ; it ’s pretty blooming hard on those of us that have to read ’em ! ’

The Red Cross Library was managed at headquarters with great wisdom and a considerable breadth of view. A protest was made by a supporter against the circulation of novels by Mrs. Elinor Glyn ; the authorities decided that any reading which induced in a patient the wish to live was to be encouraged. (A middle-aged nurse once told me that when a male patient began to stroke her hand, she knew he was on the way to recovery.)

A nurse at the Third London urged on a wounded man the advisability of sending a few cheerful words to his home in the Midlands. He declared that he and his missus had never written to each other, and a communication was altogether unnecessary.

‘ We ’ll make a start,’ said the nurse resolutely, taking writing-pad and pencil. ‘ Just a line or two to cheer her up. There ; I have begun it. “ My darling wife.” ’

‘ Ah,’ said the man, ‘ that ’ll make her laugh if anything can ! ’

It is in London, whether in the 'eighties or in the 'twenties, that you find the true loafer ; the man who has thoroughly acquired the art of sauntering, and, wearing an air of discontent, nevertheless has a great affection for the life. It does not require a considerable flight of imagination to guess at the pleasures. There are no strict hours of duty. Exhaustion from physical labour is not experienced ; little need for concentration of the mind ; it is not imperative that care be given to costume or general appearance. But for the fact that certain details of the profession frighten us, we should all be joining it late to-morrow morning.

In many cases within my acquaintance the loafer has a wife who works ; works hard and through long hours, and here his source of income is apparent, exciting no curiosity. But there are instances outside the dole period where, so far as I can gather, no income arrives, and yet the man is able to go on living ; he obtains drink, food, and tobacco, and he sometimes talks of backing horses. I have endeavoured at times to be allowed to audit his accounts, to go through his books, and no sort of success has attended my efforts. Answering inquiries, he says he manages to jog along, that there is always a chance of running across a stroke of luck, that now and then an odd task crops up. If he does obtain a few coppers, he disburses them at once, and he

spends them exclusively on himself. Chums may sometimes treat him to refreshment, but I take it that this form of generosity expects to be reciprocated, and certainly he never treats back. He talks vaguely of a regular job of work, and I have frequently looked on whilst well-intentioned folk obtained it for him (sometimes, in order to make room, displacing an industrious person), and I rarely see him remain faithful to a task for more than a couple of days. Outdoor life and spare feeding keep him, as a rule, in good health, and you will seldom find him in the hospitals. Also, you are unlikely to encounter him in the prisons. He does not steal, because this would necessitate an adroitness and an industry altogether foreign to his nature.

It is customary to speak of the loafer as belonging to the 'born treads,' but this is an exaggeration. As a baby he, escaping the dangerous first year when so many in the neighbourhood sent in their resignation, kicked and cooed and punched with great industry. During schooldays he exhibited no indication of being what is called a slacker. Never perhaps conspicuous in ability, he all the same went through the nine years of State education without notable disaster; found himself drilled by the necessity of arriving at nine on five mornings of the week, leaving at twelve, returning at two o'clock, and leaving again at half-past four. And although he acquired during those years a large quantity of information that, useful if he had intended to become a teacher or a clerk, but of less worth in the circumstances, yet this exercised his mind, and kept it busy, and made it accustomed to the habit of moving.

He leaves school with one clear determination in his head, namely, to throw overboard, as jetsam, nearly all the information that has been laboriously packed into his brain, and to be careful never again to take on board unnecessary cargo. Free of school, he starts with appetite on the first long holiday he has enjoyed for some years. His parents (as young in intelligence as himself) agree that there can be no harm in allowing him to look about for a while ; they have not decided on the occupation to which he will be placed, and they find a number of maxims to support a policy of leisureliness. To many folk it seems a pity Rome was not, by some means, built in a day ; the fact that the task occupied a longer period has justified the London parent on many occasions in adopting a deliberate method, and a trick of postponing action. Thus the lad finds himself permitted to taste the early joys of loafing, and he relishes it to the full. There is much to do in London for one who wishes to do nothing. The town offers a perpetual entertainment. Only the energy to reach the main roads, and there is everybody taking an enormous amount of trouble to interest and amuse, without insisting for a moment that one should take part ; possession of money would help, but money is by no means indispensable. London is admirably stage-managed for the boy ; comedy and tragedy, musical farce and melodrama, all are there.

Think of the sport our lad, at this time, experiences in watching the tram-cars start, detecting the moment when the conductor goes up steps to collect fares ; snatching thereupon the wild bliss of travelling for a brief space without paying, and the

fascinating risk of receiving a clump on the head if the look-out should fail and the conductor be a man of swift movement. Imagine the luck of being near the fire station when a call comes, and seeing the rapid turn-out of impatient brass and copper fire-engines, scarlet lanky fire-escape, and think of the pleasures of the chase that come in the mad rush. Conceive the mysterious delight of joining the queue outside the music-hall or cinema, listening to conversation between neighbours regarding the coming performance, offering your own views as obtained from careful survey of the illustrated posters, conveying by thumbs up that Harry So-and-so is first class, and by another gesture that Charley What's-his-name belongs to the third ; move along with the queue, and at the door slip aside on some excuse, and, allowing the rest to go in, stroll away ; why, it is almost as fine as going to see the performance ! Think of the joy of being nearly run over by motor omnibuses, of chaffing drivers of taxi-cabs whom Nature has endowed, or their own efforts invested, with red noses ; looking in at auction-rooms and making bids for suites of furniture in affected voices ; firing raillery at some serious youth on the treadmill of a tradesman's cycle cart ; slipping in at a railway station to play at trains—I tell you, life for a London boy with his hours free is not wanting in incident.

The defect is that it happens to be extremely bad for the boy. You will recollect that our lad has not obtained a separation order from activity ; he possesses youthful spirits, and has no objection at present to celerity in movement. Venturing outside the restricted space that has hitherto for him represented

town, he looks around the West End and makes a note of the fact that a large number of folk go through life there without giving themselves the inconvenience of working for a livelihood ; not complaining of his own lot, he does regard these with envy, for theirs seems to him an ideal existence ; he returns, and at home mentions his willingness to change places with one of them. The circumstance that he is, in the opinion of his father and mother, beginning to talk nonsense arouses these parents to a sense of duty, and they declare, with all the energy of tardily awakened people, that a berth must be found for him, and found for him at once. He becomes a van-boy.

He is perfectly content with the early weeks of the job. An easy-going colleague at the other end of the van, pleasant carriage exercise throughout the day, opportunities for seeing town, and the practice of repartee with other drivers and boys. He finds that to take one's part in ordinary conversation it is necessary to know what is running in the three-thirty race on the morrow, to acquire some knowledge concerning previous triumphs or failures of horses, to be able to say with emphasis and decision that Forked Lightning cannot possibly win, or that it cannot possibly lose. An attractive game this (supposing you have a taste for it), and, by common consent, false prophets are rarely derided. Should they stumble into accuracy in making anticipations, then glory and applause are awarded to them, and they are credited with a keenness of foresight high above the ordinary, regarded with the wonder given to those who can read sealed books. Generally, of course, the investors lose, but now and again comes

information concerning some one who has 'brought it off,' and one victory compensates for any number of defeats. Besides, here is a means of procuring money without the prefaced trouble of work.

You see, then, the lad mixing day by day with scarcely the most energetic of the world's workers, finding indeed that the man most esteemed by his fellows is he who contrives by artfulness to do the least for wages received. He discovers next to nothing in the shape of ambition. What his character requires at this age of sixteen is just what it does not receive. He needs drill, constant supervision, regular habits. He should be learning to do a full and complete day's work; he ought to be acquiring method and strict obedience. Our lad, having evening hours to spare and nothing in particular to fill them, either joins a band of youths that goes about searching for trouble and finding it, impelled by a craving to defy authority and with something of the spirit of revolutionaries, or—and this happens more frequently—he finds a girl whose company proves agreeable. Now comes the junction in the journey of his life. The admiration expressed in the course of his walking out induces him to believe that some greater and more generously paid position than that of a van-boy should be provided for him. He has but to mention this to receive the answer that it will be convenient if he terminates the engagement on the following Saturday.

Nobody wants a lad whose principal recommendation is that he has enjoyed the comparative freedom of van life; he himself is not disposed to enter upon any career which demands close attention, ordinary discipline. Wherefore, after enduring the number

of repulses he considers sufficient, he selects his regiment, and enlists in the army of loafers. The battalions exist nearly all over London, some stronger than others, and he can, if he will, transfer himself without elaborate formalities. He will, before this, hang about outside railway stations—being without money and wishful to obtain some—pressing his services on arriving travellers who do not require them, and this, constituting his last serious effort to earn an income, is stopped by officials who regard him as too intrusive. Thereafter he loafs, and his considerable pleasure in this occupation is that of watching other men work ; here he never approaches the point of satiety. Street accidents have for him a special attraction ; he has been known, attracted by one of these, to quicken his pace. A horse down, a man in a fit, an ambulance van approaching, a street collision ; he relishes them to the full. Disinclined for exercise, he will nevertheless walk in the odd procession that follows an arrested man to the police-station with the grimness of one performing a duty to the State ; he will stand and gaze at a house where a murder has been committed, encouraged apparently by some optimistic anticipation that the incident may, for his benefit, occur again.

There are varieties of type, but the complete loafer does not talk freely. He goes about with the air of one holding information which he prefers to keep to himself, and no doubt hopes that he shares some of the deference paid by the world to those who practise reticence ; a good deal of his conversation is made up of grunts and indistinct ejaculations.

The loafer is generally, but not always, London

born, and because of this he finds one of the greatest compensations in the fact that he is not obliged to hurry out in the morning. The countryman has been accustomed to rising early from his boyhood onward, and the task entails but little difficulty ; to the Londoner it always constitutes a hardship, and the loafer remains luxuriously in bed whilst the sounds of footsteps from the pavement outside indicate that men are going to work. If the loafer is not a bachelor, he finds an added comfort in directing his wife to hasten away to the occupation by means of which she earns her living and his, upbraiding her gruffly for want of celerity, and warning her that it is not by the practice of indolence that folk make progress in the world. Having dispatched her, he is able to turn over and go to sleep again, and rises later when, as he says, the day has been warmed up a little. The oddest detail about these households is that the working wife is often proud of the circumstance that her husband does not belong to the army of labour ; there is a distant note of pride in the tones she uses in telling you that he has not done a hand-stroke for years and years ; it is almost as though he belonged to a distinguished aristocracy. He is the pampered person of the home ; children are kept quiet when he returns of an evening to rest, and no one else thinks of using the most comfortable chair.

He is not, you will perceive, a relative of the country tramp ; he has small affection for fresh air. His lapses in these directions are restricted in favourable weather to a stroll towards one of the parks, and there, sleeping for an hour or two, he adds scarcely anything to the attractiveness of the

open spaces. He gives his patronage only to the nearest ; to reach Golders Hill or Kew Gardens would entail too much effort, and indeed his topographical knowledge is closely limited. Living, say, off Lisson Grove, he will be acquainted with Edgware Road, but he has possibly never gone west of that thoroughfare ; his eastern boundary will, in all probability, be marked by the terminus station in Marylebone Road. In this confined district he must know every flag of the pavement, for he is always gazing downwards ; I have sometimes wondered what he thinks about, and I arrive at the conclusion that he has probably trained himself to think of nothing at all.

An unwillingness to look ahead is not, it can be mentioned, restricted to the London lad. The President of New College told me once at Oxford that of the young men there who, before going down, come to bid him good-bye, quite sixty per cent. admit to him that they have not at the moment chosen a business or profession.

It would be difficult to make a comparison in value of all the changes London has seen in forty years, and it will be discreet not to make the attempt. The electric light made its bluish, ghost-like appearance outside the old Gaiety Theatre in '78 ; a chairman of a gas company said, ' When the Paris Exhibition '—then being held—' closes, the electric light will close with it ! '

Motor-drawn vehicles I first saw in the 'nineties with a man ahead carrying a cautionary red flag, and under the four miles an hour limit. Exemption from these rules came in '96, and there was a drive London to Brighton ; few of the starters lasted the distance. The motor bicycle came in, lumberingly at first, with the new century ; it did not achieve popularity until '06. The telephone service was adopted by the Postmaster-General in '05. London saw the X-rays in '96, and radium was talked about in '03.

For some reason, the London Sunday and its altered methods creates in me the greatest impression. The guide-book I purchased when I first arrived mentioned that ' Sunday is not a pleasant day for a stranger in London,' and the guide-book, I found, had grounds for the statement. Not until '96 did the House of Commons pass a resolution in favour of the Sunday opening of museums. At the last moment, the M.P. for Kirkcudbright said :

‘ If museums and art galleries are opened on Sundays, race-courses will be opened as well.’ Not what one would call a reliable tipster ; it is to be hoped the hon. member did not back his opinion with cash. The member for the Medway Division said : ‘ The motion will sweep away all the teachings of the Churches for centuries past,’ a declaration that scarcely conveyed an overwhelming compliment to the Churches. The member for Kensington became so vehement in his opposition that, towards the end of his address, he split an infinitive.

The National Sunday League was born in ’55 ; its father was Robert Matthew Morell, and it must have been a sturdy babe to have survived the grandmotherly interference and the meddling of neighbours to which it was subjected. Everything it asked for was, in the opinion of some, wrong. When it wanted to hear a Guards’ band playing on Sundays in the parks, the Archbishop of Canterbury of that time was in dire alarm, and said that unless the bands were withdrawn, ‘ I can no longer be responsible for the religion of the country.’ And the Guards’ band had to go, but the League arranged for its own bands to play. It afterwards started railway trips on Sundays, and lectures and concerts on Sundays. Professor Huxley gave the first address, and the owner of the hall was, because of this, straightway charged with keeping a disorderly house. Elsewhere the fight for the opening of museums and picture galleries on Sundays went on.

I talk here mainly about London—and I seldom attempt to write of any other town—but it is fair to recall that Manchester was the earliest to open its

Free Library on Sundays ; that Birmingham was the first to open on Sundays its Art Gallery. Coming back to the question of our own town, it is easy to describe the Sunday Londoner in the times before the League became active in its operations. The Sunday Londoner was a dull, stay-at-home fellow. He had breakfast in bed. Late in the afternoon he strolled aimlessly along mournful thoroughfares, gazing at shuttered windows, and in the evening he drifted, for want of some more exhilarating occupation, into a saloon bar. The next day he felt in the mood and temperament called 'Mondayish,' and he showed himself disgruntled, contentious, sensitive. The loneliness of London to any one without friends was acuter then than now, and Sunday was a day to be regarded with deep and genuine apprehensiveness.

You know the London Sunday at the present time. The day can be looked forward to with eagerness ; looked back upon with no feelings of gloom or remorse. The alarms and excursions awake the Londoner at a good hour. Sunday evening concerts—from Finsbury Park to Lewisham, from Hammersmith to Stratford—are a solace to age, an inspiration to youth.

But even now, Sunday is not, for all, a sufficiently occupied day. I give you the experiences of Mr. Wrigley.

Mr. Wrigley is called a missionary, and a more correct title could be easily found. He is indeed almost everything but a missionary. At the London police court to which he is attached, riddles that puzzle the magistrate are passed on to him for solution, and in a small room, furnished with a

table and three chairs, he, in his official time, plays many parts. He is :

- (a) Arbitrator between husband and wife who cannot agree.
- (b) Settler of neighbourly quarrels.
- (c) Adviser of mothers unable to rule their children.
- (d) Counsellor to folk who have attempted suicide.
- (e) General peacemaker.

Over and above all these, he is probation officer. As probation officer he has to look after the youngsters of his district who, happening at some moment to own idle hands, come across the mischief that (so Dr. Watts says) is provided by Satan. The crime is usually of a moderate type, but it brings them to the police court, where they are ordered to behave discreetly for two or, perhaps, three years, and to report themselves, at fixed intervals, to Mr. Wrigley. This being promised, they are allowed to depart, and to erase, by persistent good behaviour, the smudge on their character.

Mr. Wrigley finds that Sunday is the most perilous day for the lads on probation ; he is disposed to regard the afternoon hours, because of their emptiness, as exceptionally crowded with allurements. Therefore he secured, a while ago, a field easy of access wherein the boys could play cricket when the midday meal was over. The open space was not obtained without trouble. Miss A., a generous-hearted lady, felt willing to lend the ground, but withdrew the offer instantly on hearing that it was proposed to use it on a certain day. Apparently Miss A. had misread her Ecclesiasticus, and assumed that he who toucheth the cricket pitch on Sundays

shall be defiled therewith. From the Rev. B., once the bails were on the wickets, came a heated and angry protest. He wrote something to this effect :

‘MY DEAR SIR,—I cannot think you are aware that one of my best-behaved Sunday School lads is being persuaded to indulge in games when he should be enjoying the privilege of accepting religious instruction from his teachers. I shall be glad to hear how you reconcile this with your conscience, and, if I may say so, with your official position.’

Mr. Wrigley sent a prompt answer, calling attention to the fact that the lad had come before the magistrate in regard to an offence committed on a Sunday afternoon ; he suggested that the failure of the clergyman to look after the boy was no reason why some one else should not make the attempt.

So Mr. Wrigley escorts the lads on Sunday afternoons to the field, and sees that they play industriously, and takes care that they play fairly, and young Edward (who broke into a warehouse, and took goods to the value of sixpence) complies with the first requirements of the sport by hitting blooming high, and blooming hard, and blooming often, and little Harold (who threw stones at a Brighton railway train from a bridge) sends down a ball of which Hearne, J. W., would be proud, and Woolley not ashamed ; and Stephen (who took postage stamps belonging to some one else) keeps wicket on the lines of Strudwick. They are a group of average London boys, quick in observation, and showing no mark that I can discern of what is known as the criminal type. They require only steady treatment in order to become good, useful Londoners.

In the 'eighties, Canon Farrar—an amazingly florid and eloquent preacher, but never forgiven by some for writing *Eric, or Little by Little*—was at Westminster Abbey. Canon Liddon, at St. Paul's, delivered sermons with an effort that left his features damp. Liddon had a high, effective voice that carried well; his manner was inclined to be superior. A friend saw him once before the Canon went up to the pulpit; an inquiry was put concerning the beverage that was being taken. 'The vulgar,' answered Liddon, 'call it egg-flip!' Nonconformity had its great men, but the Silvester Horne type had not arrived, and in any chapel there was the risk of hearing something like the opening of a prayer once given in North London:

'O Lord, as Thou hast doubtless seen in yesterday's *Daily News*——' The terms of membership, with the Wesleyans, were usually given as 'An earnest desire to flee from the wrath to come.'

In Old Street, City Road, the Hall of Science which had been conducted by Mr. Charles Bradlaugh was still in existence, and in the parks on Sunday morning you could hear the exultant challenge of 'Who was Cain's wife?' I think it must have been later that the Christian Evidence Society began to take up the arguments and engage in a duel of words.

At one or two places the Church did its best to provide animation. I lived near to St. James's, Hatcham, and to that building and to the streets near determined bodies of men from all quarters of London had been coming with the rough element in sufficient prominence, and meetings were held, a general hullabaloo created. The early grievance

was against the Rev. Arthur Tooth (*Punch* alluded to the church as St. James's, Colney Hatcham), who in '77 went to prison, and the disturbances continued Sunday after Sunday until the rows became looked on in the district as a weekly entertainment. Elsewhere, as at St. Alban's, Holborn, scenes of turmoil occurred. There the High Churchmen—Mackonochie, Stanton, and the rest—were charged with the wearing of vestments, making the sign of the cross to the congregation, and kissing the Prayer Book.

The Rev. H. R. Haweis had a note of independence at his church off Oxford Street, and he cultivated an unconventionalism of manner with some assiduity. He liked to arrest his sermon in order to reprimand a choir boy; he played the violin; it was said that he once alluded by name to Hugh Drummond, a man about town who, caught in a downpour, had strolled into the church. 'We are indeed gratified,' said Haweis, 'to note the presence of one who, it is to be feared, rarely enters a sacred building; we ask him to believe he is heartily welcome, and that this indication of reform in behaviour is one that has perhaps been over long delayed.'

'Many thanks,' said Drummond, from his pew, calmly. 'By the by, can anybody oblige me with the text?'

A gaunt, semi-detached figure in London clerical life at the time was a certain Archdeacon. The end of his career in London happened rather suddenly, and the particulars are amongst the records at Scotland Yard.

Sunday of years ago seemed the untidiest day so

far as regarded the public thoroughfares. In many districts no attempt was made by the authorities to keep the streets neatly between Saturday and Monday, and, with a larkish wind about, town became clouded with bits of paper, straw, and dust; folk were constantly making an appeal for help in extracting some irritant from the eye. A certain amount of reticent gardening was done. Daring spirits amongst railway men tried to cultivate the plots rented by them at the side of the line, but letters of complaint from the strictly behaved generally put an end to that. At annual meetings of shareholders a wail of protest was often sent up against the running of cheap trains on Sundays.

London Bridge furnished the cheerfulest scene on a Sunday morning, with folk hurrying towards the Margate and Ramsgate steamboat for the day's trip, with friends seeing them off with all the agitation which would accompany a departure to the Far East. Here, as on railway journeys, food was sometimes carried; drink in sufficient quantities could always be obtained on board. There was talk then of a new bridge to cross the river near the Tower; the general view appeared to be that it was nothing but talk, and that little would come of it. When the boat had gone from the wharf, those not taking the voyage sauntered around the City, inspecting it under conditions which made the task easy. In the narrow tributaries to Lower Thames Street, scents could be encountered. Scents of spices, and here and there of a distillery or a wine cellar. At any moment a glimpse might be caught of the river. The bells of City churches made an appeal in the rather melancholy tones that come

naturally when it is recognised that a summons will not be answered. I do declare that, at the period, the one live clergyman in the City was Shuttleworth, of St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, near Queen Victoria Street.

An incident of the day—many must regret its disappearance, and especially housewives who became scarlet-faced and cross over the preparation of the midday meal—was the line of folk carrying large tins to a bakery, where the contents were roasted and called for just before one o'clock; the scent on the return journey was very good and appetising. Loin of pork seemed to be the favourite dish, with the suitable companionship of potatoes; it was reckoned to the credit of the family that a large jug should be dispatched in the charge of a reliable youngster to the nearest public-house. For the convenience of the new immigrant from the country, draught cider was provided. (An expert told me once that excessive drinking of beer is likely to make the consumer fall forward; any one overestimating his powers in regard to cider invariably falls backward. I have never been able to put the assertion to the test.)

The dullness of Sunday afternoon, when grown-ups slept in order to forget the hours, and children were ordered to take a book and read—this was broken when the Salvation Army began its invasion of London. The bands of the army were in the amateur stage, and the brass instruments were lacking perhaps in delicacy of expression. But the men and women who talked and sang were amazingly earnest, and the hymns were of an arousing

description, far removed from the sedateness of those favoured in church and chapels. Near Finsbury Park I once heard a semicircle shouting verses with the refrain :

*' There may be some on you and me,
But there ain't no flies on Jesus ! '*

The harmonium was then a popular instrument, excepting with the folk who lived next door to it, and it began a stertorous display at about eight o'clock on a Sunday evening. Male members of the family, gifted with deep voices, sang seconds which, being interpreted, meant chanting an octave lower than that chosen by the sopranos. For the rest of the week, in demure households, the harmonium was kept locked ; it seemed to be looked upon as essentially a religious instrument, and indeed it lent itself somewhat clumsily to secular airs ; it was disposed to jib when called on to tackle Mr. Sankey's lighter melodies.

In the later 'eighties home life on Sundays was beginning to relax in austerity, but houses could be found where the day's newspaper was on no account permitted to enter, and hymns only were played and sung. I imagine it must have required a good deal of tactfulness on the part of youth to overcome the prejudices of maturity, so far as tunes were concerned. ' The Lost Chord ' and other acutely sentimental melodies proved useful in making a bridge. It was reckoned a conspicuous innovation when organ recitals were given on Sunday afternoons at Albert Hall ; the programme did not err on the side of cheerfulness. Games, if played at all, were played furtively, and were likely to be followed on the

Monday by a call from the vicar. I recall that, being invited to join a game of croquet, the hostess begged the players to strike the balls gently in order that neighbours might have no reason to complain. Introduction of Brotherhood Meetings and Pleasant Sunday Afternoons into the chapels must have exhilarated the day for many. The best of these encountered by me were held at Whitefield's, in Tottenham Court Road; the large building was crowded with men, and they had a courteous habit of standing up for a moment as a mark of respect to the speaker. The speaker took but twenty minutes to give an address on some topic; cheering and laughter were not prohibited. Good, rousing, exhilarating tunes, a prayer, and a chapter made up the rest of the items. Silvester Horne, at Whitefield's, could always obtain the services of men interested in some particular subject, and his own energy and brightness seemed to be contagious. He was for many years a neighbour of mine, and one of my grievances against the House of Commons is that it induced him to become a member, to overwork himself, and in the result to deprive London of a good man.

The permission issued to enjoy Sunday games on open spaces under the direction of the County Council is sufficiently recent. It is, perhaps, much too recent to enable us to judge the results, but the new plan ought to abolish the gambling under railway arches; it should lessen the mischief of the streets; it will surely make for the cleaner body and the saner mind.

It used to be said that a gentleman was one who could wear a clean collar without appearing noticeable. This must have been at a period unknown to me ; my earliest impressions of London include the circumstance that members of my own sex used scent. They sprinkled it on the handkerchief ; the hair-washes of the day were vigorously perfumed. I must have witnessed the evaporation of scent ; the last public man I connect with the use of it was Clement Scott, the dramatist and critic. His arrival in the stalls—Inverness cape, with crimson lining—sent a whiff across the theatre which conquered all other perfumes ; I fancy there may have been a touch of patchouli about it. Clement Scott was greatly admired by occupants of the less distinguished seats on a first night, and his *Daily Telegraph* columns were amazing examples of fluent description and eager argument ; some of his readers felt pained when he took, late in life, the responsibility for these lines :

‘ *And when we rise to heights supernal,
May we say “ Adsum,” like the Colonel !* ’

Snuff was going out, but there was always a risk of encountering a snuff-taker in a railway compartment who insisted on passing the box around, and looked at you rather aggressively if you failed to take a pinch. Nicol Dunn, editor of the *Morning Post*, took snuff ; he was the only tidy individual I ever knew who had

the habit. Somebody remarked once that sneezing was the one pure and innocent joy left to mankind, and certainly folk, in spite of their distressed appearance, seemed to relish it to the full.

The height and the cut of collars vary from time to time ; there came a trying period in my earlier years when all the youth of England was on fire to sport the deepest and stiffest. The wearers stalked about with chin forcibly uplifted, and they must have given an ' Ah ! ' of intense relief in disengaging themselves at night from the trammels. Dinner jackets have come in ; for the rest, male costume for the evening hours has not altered, and one may be grateful, seeing that a dress suit fits more closely and affectionately as its years of service go on. (Lewis Waller told me that in his opinion it took eight months of continuous wearing to break in a dress coat.) Overcoats have been directed by fashion, and many can recall the winters when ulsters reigned ; they were excellent for travel, and an impediment in walking. The passing of the frock coat is a matter that, in my case, does not cause the ready tear to come to the eye. Short or tall, all at one time put on the frock coat ; gradually it was reserved for ceremonial occasions, and now, at these moments, it can usually be ignored. With the frock coat, but at a more leisurely pace, has gone the silk hat. The silk hat had its good points ; it did not blow off as a straw hat was inclined to, and it could always be handed in at a shop to be brushed and ironed. It was indispensable for church, for marriages, for funerals, and for Buckingham Palace. I believe King Edward, to the end, had very precise rules concerning the wearing of the silk hat, but he

himself made one heroic change in fashion when he began to wear the Homburg hat. The soft felt hat first routed the silk hat, and, this done, attacked the bowler. With the departure of what Scotsmen call the 'lum' hat, much of the dressiness of men has gone. If you had a silk hat you were bound to arrange that every other article of wear had a corresponding value and excellence, even to the boots. The silk hat became old but never entirely useless, and in agricultural circles did work at the last as a store place for seed potatoes ; in London it was exchanged at the hall door for a fern, and sold by the barterer to cab-drivers. At the latest possible stage it was indispensable for the guy—whoever he might be—whose luck it was to be carried around on the fifth of November.

The most vehement display of fashion in the male came one June, when the wearing of the cummerbund started. Originally intended for the river, this vividly coloured waist-belt made its way steadily, and, weather conditions being favourable, continued to invade the City. The City, under stress of heat, can throw all the dictates of fashion to the winds—if there are any—and suddenly determine to do exactly as it pleases. The City, if it likes, will go about jacketless ; it will carry paper fans ; I have seen it wear a cabbage leaf inside the hat. The cummerbund, in its brief life, did introduce an element of colour that is generally absent from Throgmorton Street.

In the plays of my youth the characters of men were easily recognised ; if a man wore an eyeglass he was a fool, and if he smoked a cigarette you were

not far wrong in assuming that he was up to no good.

I suppose the eyeglass was partially ousted by the pince-nez ; it still obtains with members of the bar, but, I observe, is worn only in the evening hours. Now, any one who wishes to offer an aspect of real intelligence calls in the aid of horn-rimmed spectacles ; they give to a literary dinner party a strangely owl-like appearance. A few ladies, finding the monocle lying about, have taken it up, but their features, in wearing it, indicate bodily pain, and I cannot think the union is a completely happy one.

Londoners had a clean shave in the 'nineties, and they have not since played any tricks with their features beyond an attempt, in Chelsea and St. John's Wood, to cultivate whiskers of domino shape. It is likely the safety razor helped in this reform ; before it came there were men whose morning struggles in front of the mirror were of a blood-thirsty description, and they came down to breakfast plastered all over in the style of a draper's establishment announcing Autumn Sales. To be thin-skinned in those days meant that you either went on fiercely and doggedly with this species of warfare, or that you gave it up and allowed the growth of a beard, and suffered its accompanying air of heavy maturity.

The bustle was being worn in the early 'eighties, but it no longer tried to be over-conspicuous ; it was being flattened out prior to its final disappearance. Little bonnets were favoured by young women, with the alternative of Leghorn hats, and my impression of the sex is that from neck to waist

they were severely and closely appavelled ; from waist to ground there were flounces, drapery, and a remarkable suggestion of expansiveness. I had seen, in Kent, society ladies, such as grocers' daughters, adopting the Alexandra limp, and the Grecian bend, but I do not think I witnessed either in London ; fashion, then, had a trick of dying hard in remote districts. All modes are comic to posterity, and to-day nothing is quite so diverting as the sketches of slim-waisted young women of years ago ; it used to be one of the first points mentioned in any account of a lady, and a measurement beyond nineteen inches suggested that the poor girl was out of the competition.

Champagne was then *The Widow*—a reference to *Veuve Clicquot*—or *The Bubbly*—a nickname easily understood—or *The Boy*. *The Boy* is a title that always puzzled me until, the other day, I was informed that, in a well-known sporting club, the wine was carried about on a tray by a youth ; this fact, it is declared, gave the word. A well-dressed youth was a masher (in going about the East End it used to gratify me enormously to be thus referred to by critical factory girls), and the regiment to which he belonged was known as the *Crutch and Toothpick Brigade*. The toothpick was used quite openly, just as some tram-car passengers now use their tickets, and the most stylish wore a fob to their watch-chain. City men of rotund figure were distinguished by an *Albert* that went well across their capacious waistcoats ; jet chains had not entirely gone out, and were correct if you happened to be in mourning.



According to J. H. Dowd

The depth of black borders on note-paper when a relative had gone was a matter for nice adjustment by experts ; in its most acute form it nearly covered the surface of an envelope, and, during the period of sorrowing, it was forbidden to use red or even violet sealing-wax. Monograms were quite indispensable on the flaps of envelopes, and sentimental folk set there, too, a representation of their favourite flower or, circumstances permitting—as in the case of Rose or Ivy or Violet—an indication of their Christian name. As to the mourning cards, sent out so religiously, one cannot think of them and their extraordinary verses without a shudder. The monuments set up were truly monumental. A guide, taking visitors through a London cemetery, showed with pride an enormous tomb and read aloud the inscription, ‘To a faithful husband, an honest lawyer, a high-minded statesman.’

‘But, tell me,’ begged one of the visitors, ‘what was the idea in burying all three in the same grave?’

Correspondence has gradually lessened in extent, and you will observe that clubs now provide single sheets of letter paper only. The communication of years ago seemed to think it had the quality of abruptness unless, on the last page, the writing was crossed, giving the recipient all the satisfaction to be obtained from guessing a riddle. I observe an improvement in handwriting, although one is still glad, for the sake of legibility, to receive the typed letter. There were schools of penmanship in London towards the end of the last century ; one existed in the Strand at about the point where the Gaiety Theatre is now found, and at others you were invited to look at deplorable specimens executed by

the pupil at the start, and compare them with the glorious achievements at the finish.

The old formulas have gone. One was :

‘ I now sit down to take up my pen, hoping this will find you all well as, thank Heaven, it leaves me at present.’ The four-paged communication ended with an apology. ‘ Pray excuse more, as I am desirous of catching the post.’

It was Tree who, when a club member—his only companion in the smoking-room—announced at two-thirty A.M. an intention to depart, said protestingly :

‘ My dear fellow ! Surely you ’re not going to leave me here to spend the rest of the evening by myself ! ’

London hours have altered, and ere midnight the Strand and Piccadilly Circus are empty ; in the ’eighties it was reckoned a grievance that licensed premises closed on Saturday nights so early as twelve o’clock, whereas on other nights the counter did business until half-past the hour. I have alluded elsewhere to the increase in sobriety, and to the changed view taken of excess. One of the stories of years ago concerned a Fleet Street man who, after a dinner, found he was unable to walk. Two companions escorted him to his home in Brixton Road. Arriving there, he declared that nothing on earth would induce him to go in until he had been provided with just one more drink ; the two carried him up the steps, discovered the latchkey in his pocket, opened the front door, and, sending him inside, pulled the door to quickly. To make sure that he did not create a tumult, or play about with

matches, they waited at a convenient distance. Presently, the front door opened; a hand was extended. A pair of boots was deposited near the sill, and the door closed quietly. If this anecdote were told in public to-day, the venue would have to be changed to Glasgow.

I suppose London rises earlier as a consequence of the better night hours; it might well take the opportunity of seeing itself in the morning hours when town has had a wash and brush up, and has enjoyed the brief space of purification of the air. The Embankment at four o'clock on a summer's morning is very good; to make your way past Blackfriars and into Upper Thames Street is to see how a big town stretches its arms, yawns, and finally decides to awaken. The Tower, farther east, stands out clean cut against the morning light; in the trees that fringe the deep dry moat, birds sing as loudly as a street boy whistles. You can realise here that Nature gives both to London and the country a fair start; it is the misfortune of London that the air worsens as the day goes on.

The war and the attacks on London did something to break down aloofness between neighbours, but the pendulum has swung back, and it is again the Londoner's proud boast, as it was in the last century, that he has no acquaintance with the folk next door. And there is something gained by this detachment; friendship can so often transform itself into undisguised animosity, and to be reticent is one of the Safety First rules where Londoners are concerned. At times, the situation leads to perplexity. Number Twenty-Five in a London square having regarded

Number Twenty-Six with a cold stare for years, is suddenly introduced to Twenty-Six at a hydro at Buxton, and Twenty-Five says, in a puzzled way : ' Do you know, I feel sure we have met before ! '

Mark Melford, a well-known actor and a man of high repute, was expecting his sister at Paddington ; he told Mrs. Melford that if the sister arrived he intended to take her to the afternoon performance at the Oxford. Mrs. Melford, on her way to meet them, encountered a comedian's wife, who mentioned that she had just come from the Oxford.

' And did you,' asked Mrs. Melford, ' happen to see my husband there, with a young woman ? '

' Love,' said the other frankly, ' I did not. And if I had, I most certainly shouldn't tell you ! '

The aloof way is the easier because of the new habit of taking the evenings away from home. A decreased supply of maids for the kitchen has helped to produce this effect ; the master of the household, finding his partner rendered gloomy by the monotonous tasks of the household, decides to take her out to a restaurant, or to a theatre, or to a cinema. (In the minor suburbs where money is short it can always be found to enable the family to go, one evening a week, to the picture palace.) Thus folk are no longer dependent for society on those living near to them. Parties are held less frequently. At Homes are becoming rare. You cannot give a real At Home if you have to answer the door yourself.

For the same reason, there is less of overcrowding on sideboards and mantelpieces and carpets, and any labour-saving device is given a trial. To be reminded of the furniture of years ago, I have to look in at small houses, Tidal Basin way, where

the Victorian style is fighting in the last ditch. There and there only will you find the horsehair sofa that represented discomfort in its acutest form ; you will see the immense saddle-bagged easy chair, the white hearth-rug, the lustres, the amazing vases, the magnificent but uninformative clock. Tidal Basin preserves the manner of covering walls with frames, and the pictures are either historical (Duke of Wellington, Lord Roberts, Lord Kitchener) or religious (Joseph and his Brethren), or both. In Tidal Basin there comes to every man and every woman a day when it is resolved that a portrait must be enlarged, and set in a good light ; the general effect, where the family happens to be numerous and the room small, is indeed terrifying.

A few people still take equestrian exercise, but many other forms of taking the air have come forward, and the constitutional in Rotten Row is no longer a subject for brag. Instead, men talk of golf, and women play it, and it is a car and not a horse that takes them to the club-house. I have an acquaintance who drives a four-in-hand, and when he takes me out into the country, young folk look on amusedly as though they were spectators at a circus ; the elderly gaze with respect, and with an indication of sentiment. It is a matter of taste, but the rhythmic sound of hoofs on the highway has, for my ears, a music that the rush and the hoot of a car never provide ; the sight of any horse-drawn vehicle has a dignity and an attraction that I do not observe in a motor lorry.

I rode, in my very youthful days, a forty-six inch bicycle ; the introduction of the safety machine

gave a popularity to cycling which it enjoyed for years. Distinguished people met at Battersea Park for a ride ; in the comparative seclusion of squares there was always comic relief in the spectacle of bulky ladies going through a course of lessons. Society, after a while, detached itself from the sport, and the bicycle, become a bike, was used as a means of transport. The traffic of London roads has always suffered a process of extermination. The cycle routed the pedestrian. The motor car frightened the cyclist and was chased by the motor coach. I daresay the motor-coach driver is wondering how long it will be ere he has to defend himself.

Cycling tracks were laid down at various points near London, and great interest was shown in the racing. Holbein and Shorland were the equal of Rosebery and Leighton ; champions went into business later on Holborn Viaduct. Also, in the way of sport, displays of walking took place with men going on for days, and when this palled, you could stroll along to the Aquarium at Westminster and share, with others, the delirious joy of looking at a man who was making a prolonged experiment in fasting. And, being there, you were able to see a girl—who proved later on to be a boy—shot out of a cannon amidst all the excitement that ingenious showmen could create. The general attitude towards these exhibitions was that taken up by a party of young women who once sat near me at a bull fight in Spain. The first damaged horse was being led from the arena.

‘ The whole business,’ said one, ‘ is too disgusting and too horrible for words ; lend me the opera glasses ! ’

The coming of the motor omnibus effected a remarkable alteration in the behaviour of Londoners. The motor omnibus took some time to get into working order, and everybody—including the drivers of the horsed conveyances—showed great exultation over a break-down. ‘Any old iron?’ they used to inquire. And, to a conductor of one, moved, after the disaster, to a by-street to await repairs, they always said reproachfully, ‘Surprised at you, old man; keeping two ’omes. Some one’s bound to tell the missus!’ But from the hour when the motor omnibus was able to perform its journey without incident began the speeding up of the Londoner; it has been increasing ever since. The swiftly moving vehicle acted as a pace-maker. London decided to hurry. Slow walkers were pushed off the kerb, and the verdict at the inquest was ‘Death from natural causes.’ Tyres were, in the apprentice stage, a continual source of anxiety.

A writer of my acquaintance bought his first car, and, after taking some elementary lessons, invited his wife and some friends to take a drive into the country. Arrived at an inn after a forty-mile run, they took an excellent lunch, and came out to find that the tyre of one of the back wheels had given way. The owner tinkered at it for some time, until his wife declared her intention of walking home if he continued to use such language, upon which he made inquiries, and started on a four-mile stroll down the hill. The party, waiting his return, noticed that he came back warm and annoyed, and this prepared them for the information that the proprietor of the works had closed his shop, and was absent at a wedding. Deciding to crawl until another repairing

establishment was reached, the disconsolate guests were ordered into the car. The slowly moving car found itself arrested because a farmer, who had been watching, ran after it with appealing cries. 'Hi, mister,' he shouted, when he came up to it. 'Hi! Are yew aware as your back tyre's down?'

LET us see if we can make up a balance-sheet of town. The chartered accountants will verify or amend it.

First, the debit side.

The criminal has many grades, and you find him living in Jermyn Street West, at Fanshaw Street, Hoxton, near Sirdar Road, Notting Dale ; I dare say it would be possible to discover him in Melody Road, Wandsworth Common. Assuming that he is not mentally defective—and those who break the law on this account ought not to be punished, but to undergo a process of cure—he knows the odds are heavily against him ; from a course of reading at the public library he ascertains that captures are frequent ; rarely does a man set upon the task without making one blunder, overlooking one detail. Nevertheless, this is the work to which he sets his hand, and he knows he will have to use the best of his intelligence. It is a sporting life, and there is something to be said in favour of those who take part ; if only it could be practised without causing detriment to others, it could claim many of the virtues of ambition.

It must be conceded that London can breed criminals. London huddles its people so closely together in certain quarters that the young, being first of all imitative, see and copy the defects of their elders. No boy growing up in a certain street known to me (not far from Shoreditch Church) can remain

ignorant of the doings of adventurous folk residing in every room of the house ; the talk is of nothing else ; a single triumph means for him fried sausages and liver and bacon ; he knows from the moment he begins to speak that he must never betray secrets, understands that the helmeted man out in the public streets represents an enemy to be dodged or discomfited ; the police station to him is what the corner of a room used to be to us in days of imperfect youth, the large building in Caledonian Road a place where a rest cure has to be undergone by those who have extravagantly overtaxed themselves. The wonder is not that a child in such surroundings grows up a nuisance to society, and a costly one ; the astonishing thing is that sometimes he develops, by the sturdy help of outside influences, into a decent member. The mere pulling down of houses does not arrest production of the London criminal. Some years ago a district in the East End, notable on account of its inhabitants, was cleared, excellent model dwellings erected, and a new and superior class of inhabitants came ; the reformers slapped each other on the back, and said, ' That 's all right ! ' But the expelled went only a couple of miles out, and you found most of them living within a small radius, carrying on the same profession, reconstituting their environments on the old plan.

The new arrivals who come from the Continent of Europe to work in the East End appear so genuinely grateful to London for taking them into its service that they model behaviour on strict lines, give themselves small time for the committal of misdemeanours ; their deportment forms a contrast to that adopted by similar visitors who drift in a westerly

direction with the frank intention of doing no work at all. London has for so many years been taking new servants with no references that something of the kind was sure to happen. There they are, at any rate, in Soho and near Tottenham Court Road, and it is satisfactory to know they are kept well under observation, that any details of their careers which the police require are readily furnished by their closest friends. To remain for half an hour in one of their clubs and give ears to their conversation is to wonder why they are allowed to enjoy freedom ; the experts amongst the detective force will remind you, first, that their bark is a great deal worse than their bite ; second, that it is convenient to be able to say, without any doubt, where they can be found if wanted.

In definitely outlined districts such as those just mentioned, surrounded on all sides by valuable shop buildings, you will see brass bell-knobs, at the side of doorways of the foreigners' houses, almost as numerous as the stops of an organ. The one-roomed life exists also in other neighbourhoods, where a market or any centre for labour makes it indispensable the worker should live near. Enormous improvement in transit effected in recent years has loosened the bonds, but the swiftest electric cars form no inducement to those who, having grown up in restricted surroundings, desire nothing better. No power yet discovered will help the mature Londoners who do not wish to be helped, and any effort of the kind causes them to put on the brake at once. I could take you into houses in Bethnal Green, for instance, where you would say the top note of discomfort had been reached, and these are

the dwelling-places, not of indolent people, but of folk who work about ten times as hard, every day of the week, as any of those of us who count ourselves energetic. The women there are engaged on some such task as the making of fancy boxes, artificial flowers, costumes ; a strong odour of glue pervades the entire house ; in some of the rooms the clatter of the sewing-machine rarely ceases. You might think these would hail any attempt to improve the environments ; I assure you they regard such efforts with genuine alarm.

The average Londoner is in urgent need of a pair of spectacles. He suffers greatly on account of imperfect eyesight. At long distances he is good, and he can take a clear interest in large political questions, although it may be doubted whether, even here, he is equal in intelligence to his contemporaries in provincial towns. He has, at any rate, his views about them, views generally coinciding with those expressed in the particular journal he buys, and he can speak on a topic with volubility. But the objects against which he is daily rubbing his shoulders do not arouse this animation. You ask him why he does not give some of his attention to local affairs in the borough where he happens to live, and he first stares intently. 'I leave all that,' on realising that the question is not meant to be humorous, 'to the jerry-builders and the publicans. Don't ask me,' he says appealingly, 'to mix myself up with that lot !' Yet he is the first to complain when things are not managed perfectly ; his criticisms as he goes to the City in the morning are loud enough to stop the train. Either he does not see, or wishes not to see, that as

a citizen of no mean country it is his duty to take an active part in the control and to offer whatever intelligence he may possess to the considerable work of guiding local affairs.

London is deficient in patriotism. This does not mean that it cannot sing 'Rule Britannia,' that it has no flags to exhibit in back gardens on the King's birthday, or that it fails to take off a hat when the National Anthem is played. A Londoner is proud of belonging to Great Britain, satisfied with being an inhabitant of town, but he cannot even pretend a show of exultation in being a resident of (say) Stoke Newington. Now Stoke Newington has a good area, a large population, is attended with a fair amount of prosperity. If, by a dexterous operation, it were cut out and placed somewhere in the country, local patriotism would at once begin to grow, and men born there would proudly give themselves a nickname, and say, 'I, myself, am a Stoker!' But in London, with a neighbourhood surrounded by half a dozen others, a man may live in that neighbourhood all his life, his father and grandparents may have been associated with it, and his sons may intend to stay there, and the family will speak of it only in excusing, deprecatory tones. By studiously refraining from cultivating local patriotism, the Londoner misses a precious joy that the intelligent habitant of other towns enjoys and deserves. He also escapes the chance of assisting those less favourably situated than himself, but this deprivation he probably bears with equanimity.

London can scarcely be called an excessively altruistic town. Most of its well-to-do people are too intent upon their own careers to give thought

to any one else, and those who have the desire to give are frequently the people without means to do so. The generosity of the streets comes mainly from those but a few degrees higher than the applicants. With all this, the Londoner should be thrifty. He is not. He should buy a mackintosh for a rainy day ; the fates, when they decide to be cruel, find him unprepared. There exists scarcely any class which can plead not guilty to the charge of wastefulness, from the family in Gee Street, Somers Town, putting its parcel away at the corner shop on Monday mornings, and retrieving it on Saturday nights, to the household in Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, never paying a tradesman's account until a summons has been issued. Folk in enjoyment of an exact and precise income, with precise and exact disbursements, might be reasonably expected to draw up, with the aid of compound arithmetic, a financial scheme that would prove satisfactory ; these frequently discover themselves in straits identical with those encountered by people who have to rely upon fluctuating receipts, or upon whom disaster frequently calls. Junior clerks, paid monthly, begin to borrow from each other before the tenth. Pay-day is looked upon as a miraculous event, and the impression seems to be that a second miracle may cause the proceeds to vanish unless they are immediately distributed. In many quarters the haste is the result of a desire to be royal for an hour. On the ' Easy come, easy go ' argument, this can be understood when a sudden and unexpected discovery of gold is made, but it seems unpardonable in ordinary circumstances, and the only excuse to be offered is that those who concentrate magnifi-

cence into the first few days are, at any rate, the same people who are willing to endure strict economy during the remainder of the month, and the punishment is therefore self-applied. All the same, it could be wished that the literature found in the home of the Londoner included more often a Post Office savings book.

The good temper of the Londoner can be referred to in considering his merits, but there is a quality in this connection which has to be counted amongst his faults. He is fond of proclaiming, in regard to certain grievances, that he will put up with them no longer, and having said this, continues to put up with them. His indisposition to fight make him endure things which he should never tolerate. He likes to grumble, and a perfect world would, for him, be deplorably imperfect, in that it would give him no excuse for grumbling ; to-morrow is his favourite date for undertaking some important step. Priding himself greatly on his sense of humour—always a dangerous claim to make—he is lacking in the humour which should above all prevent one from becoming conceited, and he is unwilling to admit that vivacity exists elsewhere ; he counts the inhabitants of other towns as dull dogs. In truth, his behaviour to the world finds a variant in an air of sulkiness adopted within his own walls, where he insists on the right either not to speak or, if speaking, to use only the language of flat contradiction, with a touch of acidity which he reckons as satire. More effusive than a Scotsman and less immediately gracious than an Irishman, he not infrequently falls disastrously between the two methods, and has to suffer from being misunderstood. The most deplorable thing

in this regard is perhaps that he does not understand himself.

Now let us take the credit side of the balance-sheet.

A visitor must admit that in London he is treated with courtesy. A traveller in a public conveyance wants to be set down at a turning not within the knowledge of the conductor ; at once every passenger gives up other interest, and attention is concentrated on the problem. The delight of Londoners on discovering the presence of a Colonial unable to distinguish between St. Margaret's and the Abbey is something that cannot be restrained ; brisk competition ensues for the privilege of acting as guide. A Londoner of whom a direction is asked takes a moment to recover from his surprise at the question (it seems incredible to him that anybody at Trafalgar Square should be ignorant of the way to Charing Cross), but, the situation once realised, he will take considerable trouble in giving the information required ; some may count it a defect that in doing so he sometimes forgets to range himself, as a constable does, side by side with a questioner, with the result that in his recommendations left becomes right and right becomes left, but his intention is always admirable.

Domestic argument takes place less frequently in the roadway, and any attempt to revert to the old methods of public debate is met with urgent counsel from neighbours ; the parties are recommended to transfer consideration to a private committee of the house. The decrease in outdoor fights is due, I believe, to the fact that so many youths are being taught to box ; a scientific knowledge prevents

them from behaving stupidly, and the training gives them some control over temper. The tussle of the street is generally engaged upon by fools who are not sure whether they can fight, but are inclined to make an experiment. Here, the increasing temperateness of London in regard to drink is a factor.

The general impression of the Londoner on holiday, and one that will require many pens working through many years to eradicate, is that he goes intoxicated to the Heath, where he dances foolishly after changing hats with his lady companion, roaring his way home at a late hour, and generally breaking the peace into small fragments. I spent recently the whole of a Bank Holiday at Hampstead. I saw in the afternoon two boys simulating inebriety, but stopping this on seeing one of their teachers. In the late evening, during the course of half an hour's walk home, I detected three men and one woman who were extravagantly lively. There was dancing on the Heath, and good dancing too; skipping (we should all feel a great deal better in health if we found some corner and skipped privately for half an hour every day), swinging in boats, a dozen different opportunities for testing skill, from shooting at a ball that danced on a spurt of water to the aiming at coco-nuts on dwarf sticks, and the crashing of a hammer on a machine which registered the amount of force put into the task. Everywhere a good blend of decorum and gaiety. Now, when you consider the anticipations preceding this event, the encouragement to youth on finding itself in a large open space to run amok and create mischief, the fact that here is an occasion on which there is money to be spent, friends encountered, relatives welcomed, it will be

agreed surely that the Londoner has discovered how to take his pleasures sanely. It is not, of course, every one who goes to the open on Bank Holiday. Many a Londoner devotes the hours to his garden. The pride of a townsman who by courage, ability, and artfulness can induce flowers to grow is something that may possibly be equalled ; it can scarcely be surpassed. (If, in addition, he raises lettuces, then he becomes a man who must only be addressed in tones of great deference.) In compartments of City trains you will see, any summer morning, young and middle-aged men ignoring their newspaper and risking the acquisition of a squint in their anxiety to admire the rose in their button-hole ; waiting with a certain impatience to respond to inquiries concerning its title. The children of hard-up districts are being encouraged in this direction, and their flower shows given during the daffodil and hyacinth time in such neighbourhoods as Hoxton and Bethnal Green give them some of the joys of the landowner. Where no facilities exist for private cultivation, window-boxes are used and increasingly used from Grosvenor Square west to Canrobert Street east ; there is reason to believe that the time will come when any window in any quarter of town will reckon itself naked and ashamed unless its sill contributes some colour and some brightness to the general effect. The sentiment which the Londoner, young, middle-aged, and old, hides in regard to so many subjects is not concealed where flowers are concerned. You can make yourself more popular by taking bunches to the County Council schools than by practising any other form of bribery.

The Londoner, being an enthusiastic hunter for occurrences, never can, however urgent the task on which he may be engaged, refrain from adding himself to any crowd that is assembling, and he does not leave until he has ascertained all the particulars. The Londoner possesses some of the instincts of a journalist ; his desire to be in a position to report exclusive news is sufficiently acute to encourage him at times into exaggeration. The City man, arriving home, likes nothing so much as to be able to put the question, ' Who do you think I met to-day ? ' insisting that his wife should guess, and keeping her upon the tenterhooks of suspense before proclaiming the information. Failing imperial news of this kind, he has, with any luck, a sheaf of incidents that his observation has gained, from the presence of distinguished visitors at the Mansion House to the crippling of a motor lorry in Newgate Street ; the wife, on her side, offers a number of happenings which have come under her notice since his departure at twenty to nine that morning. Thus a fair exchange is made, to the advantage of both parties. I have mentioned that the Londoner is sometimes tempted into exaggeration. This happens only when the actual event is, from circumstances not within his control, lacking in sparkle and pungency. He cannot be charged with the instinctive untruthfulness that belongs to the inhabitants of some portions of His Majesty's kingdom, and is to be found also among the imported aliens. County Court judges of town will give him a good character ; when he makes an adventure into perjury, he does it with so much clumsiness that fraud disappears. The Londoner, indeed, has a profound respect for

the law, although he may sometimes break it, and the most determined iconoclast is a fervent worshipper of the policeman's glove, ready and anxious to obey its slightest movement.

A characteristic of the Londoner (which he shares with his countrymen) is the readiness to shake hands once a fight is over. He may struggle and argue and post bills and speak at street corners while the struggle progresses, but once the matter is settled by a higher authority he wastes no time in treasuring rancour, and is indeed obviously relieved to find the contest finished. The Londoner has spacious and regular opportunities for public oratory, in the parks, near railway arches, at open triangles ; because of the existence of these opportunities only a few take advantage. The Londoner does not mind listening, generally presenting a shoulder to the speaker and his features wearing an expression of amusement ; he prefers the cruet-stand type of address, with plenty of mustard and vinegar and pepper, and on the north side of Hyde Park will stroll from the Christadelphian group to one with a red banner in search of the most vigorous speech, the voice which can be heard without auricular effort. He looks upon it all as an entertainment, regards the furious exertions of the man on a chair as he would watch a turn at the music-halls. There came at one time to Regent's Park on Sunday mornings an ex-convict who, underneath one of the trees, spoke with enormous fury of the hardship of prison life, of his grievances against warders, whirling his arms about madly, frothing at the lips, and in general eccentricity outbidding the occupants of the Zoological Gardens close by. He always had a good audience

until, his energy exhausted, he began to speak more calmly and to give a warning based on personal experience, a recommendation to pursue the straight path ; at the first words of this part of his discourse the crowd began to break off in flakes, and in less than three minutes his audience consisted of a policeman, two nursemaids, and a young foreign waiter.

The Londoner is made up of many types, benefiting sometimes by those contributed every day by the country, and it is not claimed here that he is turned out of one mould. Whether born in town or recruited later, he does, however, acquire certain characteristics that are mainly the result of his surroundings, and the average Londoner is the man who has been under consideration.

Henley, when editing the *National Observer*, received a book written by Cosmo Monkhouse. He placed it aside for dispatch to one of his young men with the note, 'Be kind to Monkhouse.' Before it was sent off, Henley came across, in some journal, a caustic reference to himself by the author of the book. He amended the note, and made it read, 'Be just to Monkhouse !'

I have tried here to be just to the Londoner.

I SAW the hurdy-gurdy in its declining years, when the boys who started in the profession had become elderly folk and their monkeys gave indications of senility. The piano-organs brought a more inspiring note to London streets ; there was greater rapidity in the movement, and they did not depend so much on lugubrious airs from grand opera ; they favoured patriotic songs, and when these were played in Bloomsbury and elsewhere, windows opened, and pennies fell in the roadway. At that time, the business was entirely in the hands of foreigners. Most of them appear to have retired on the gains to the country of their birth.

The piano-organ was a musical instructor, and we have to thank it for better accuracy in singing and whistling. For an air to be whistled in the streets means that it has achieved high popularity ; many composers must have waited eagerly for the first signs, and noted the length of the run. When I came to London ' Up in a Balloon ' could still be heard :

*' Up in a balloon, boys, up in a balloon,
All around the little stars, and sailing round the moon.'*

In the remoter districts it was possible to encounter ' Champagne Charlie ' :

*' Champagne Charlie is my name,
Half a pint of fo'penny is my game.'*

It will be observed that then, as now, the words did not matter ; the melody was everything.

For the most part, the streets favoured a ballad tinged with melancholy :

*' In the gloaming, oh, my darling,
Think not bitterly of me.'*

And a particularly mournful song, ' Grandfather's Clock ' :

*' And it stopped short, never to go again,
When the old man died !'*

I feel sure ' Nancy Lee ' brought a sprightlier and a manlier tone ; the competition amongst youths desirous of giving it at evening parties must have been acute. Maybrick and Molloy did a great deal to brisken up the attitude of the street singer.

In '87 there was the Jubilee song, with music borrowed from Paris, where Paulus sang it in honour of General Boulanger. Also, amongst a jumble of tunes refusing to be set in chronological order, there was ' Wait till the clouds roll by,' and ' White Wings ' :

*' White wings that never grow weary,
They carry me cheerily over the sea.'*

I fancy that of the songs which reached the streets ' Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay ' had the most universal adoption ; it sent off all the rest, and held the field. Miss Lottie Collins sang it at the Tivoli in '90 ; the queer detail was that it had previously been known for years in the States, and had not become extravagantly popular there. Later, Marie Lloyd's ' Mr. Porter ' took command :

*' Oh, Mr. Porter, what shall I do,
I wanted to go to Birmingham, and they've sent me
on to Crewe.'*

The Savoy tunes brought a higher class of music and a more dexterous style in words ; the Captain's song in *H.M.S. Pinafore* was quickly taught and learnt.

There arrived also, from the music-halls :

*' And you 'll look sweet, upon the seat,
Of a bicycle made for two.'*

and 'Two lovely black eyes,' and E. J. Lonnen's 'Killaloe.' Black eyes have gone out of fashion—I felt quite amazed in coming across one in Hoxton the other day—and Ireland is no longer regarded as a place where diverting incidents are likely to happen. There came an appetite for Cockney songs :

*' You ain't forgotten yet that night in May,
Down at the Welsh 'Arp which is 'Endon way.'*

In these Albert Chevalier and Gus Elen were the leading men ; I always thought Elen the greater comedian, and the truer to type.

The black-featured minstrel still exists, but he has given up the blackmailing trick of earlier days. He was then disposed to take refreshment in excess, and he sang huskily to groups waiting to enter the theatre ; any hesitation on the part of young men to tender gifts to his outheld straw hat, and the gentleman of colour began a verse of such an appalling nature that in the interest of the girls in their charge, the young men swiftly made contributions in order to persuade the vocalist to stop. Amongst these entertainers was the singer composer, who borrowed his art from certain turns in the music-hall.

' If any lady or gentleman will kindly give me the name of some well-known personage I will immediately make up rhymes concerning him.' And he,

too, could introduce the element of abuse if voluntary donations were not forthcoming.

*' The josser in the white bowler hat I see for the first time in my life,
But I'll swear that the party who's with him just now is not his own true lorful wife ! '*

There was then the contortionist, younger than he is to-day, and the seafaring-looking man who implored folk to tie him with ropes and dare him to get free ; his annoyance when, just before regaining liberty, the doors opened and the crowd struggled to get in, was, in the circumstances, pardonable.

The art of playing the violin imperfectly was not relinquished for many years ; the idea seemed to be that a pathetic effect could be gained which correctness might never have secured. With the dulcimer, on the other hand, dexterity was reckoned commendable. Few entrances to saloon bars were, on Saturday nights, without one of these instruments, and the speed of the performance induced generous and bemused folk to give liberally.

Many folk have complained of the noise of London ; I cannot think of many moments when the sounds caused me irritation. As Mr. Yeats says :

*' To me the tumult of the street
Is no less music than the sweet
Surge of the wind across the wheat.'*

There are, I admit, one or two spots where the clamour is excessive. Blackwall Tunnel, for instance. The railway arches at Vauxhall. Aldgate. But, in the main, the roar of London traffic is continuous and not ejaculatory, and for that reason, and at a convenient distance, it has a soothing effect. More perturbing to the Londoner is the deadly

stillness that comes in one or two of the early hours, when the last taxi-cab has hurried home and the market vans have not arrived. (The conditions happened, you will recall, during the air raids when the warning had been given, and ere the first sounds of attack and defence were heard.) I cannot help thinking that the few London people who become exasperated when music starts in the roadway near, would, if living in the country, show a like distress when a cow moos or a dog barks.

A railway-engine that gives imitations of the crowing of a cock is perhaps no lullaby, but the rumble of trains is something to which one can get accustomed ; the many underground services bring weird sounds into certain households, and they also manage to set pictures awry. The hooting of siren whistles has a tinge of melancholy, but it is in a way comforting to those who are not, in this way, summoned to work. On nights of fog, the river-side has to listen to booming noises ; here again is consolation in the knowledge that it is others who are in peril on the Thames. I would not choose a residence near to a tramway depot. I think one does well to avoid any spot available for fairs and the tunes ground out to accompany wooden horses in their circulating movements. There is a murderous regularity about these instruments that eventually clouds the brightest outlook.

A fearsome type of the street musician was the individual who, not content with being one performer, had an aspiration to be a complete orchestra ; the jazz player of to-day is his lineal descendant. For this purpose he rigged himself out in an elaborate

manner, and he had Pandean pipes at his mouth, at his elbow a castanet, in front of him a drum, on his head bells, and, somehow or other, he contrived also to play on a triangle. The general effect was interesting, but not, to the delicate ear, grateful. It was, as the lady said to Dr. Johnson about her own musical performance, difficult. 'Would God, madam, that it had been impossible!' The jews' harp was at the other end in the list of instruments. It conveyed its melody to no one but the player, and on him it had revenge by jarring his teeth horribly. The tin whistle made a wider appeal, but the limitations of notes hampered it in any attempt to deal with florid airs. There came, much later, the ocarina, but this was suddenly dropped; the results, apparently, were not judged equal to the pains bestowed.

I know few pleasanter experiences than to go into a London County Council school where particular attention is given to singing, and to hear the youngsters give the carefully modulated airs which they have learnt. Boys in these establishments know the Harrow songs :

'Forty years on, when afar and asunder,'

and

'There were wonderful giants of old, you know.'

The girls often sing their glees delightfully; for some reason children's voices lifted up in song make more than anything else the tears come to one's eyes. (It is an odd circumstance that perhaps the sweetest voices are to be found near the Chinese district at Pennyfields, where some of the youngsters are the offspring of mixed marriages.) I never tire of hearing the children give Kipling's 'Recessional.'

Given a choice, I ask that ' Land of Hope and Glory ' be excluded from the programme.

We shall never, in London, equal the Welsh in part-singing, but town children, on the return journey from country holidays, can often astonish listeners at railway junctions by the charm of their performance. For the streets, they still favour the airs picked up from the variety stage, or acquired from open-air performances, rather than those which have been impressed on them in school hours. In the same way, I watch them in the hall going through the Morris dances. In the public thoroughfares they prefer to give more vivacious exhibitions.

For many years we took about a thousand children from the hard-up districts of town to the final rehearsal at Drury Lane of the pantomime. It was good of the management to let us arrange this ; it is fair to say that the youngsters repaid the courtesy by the energy and volume they gave to the choruses. They did help the performance, so far as the overture was concerned, to escape some of the staidness that attended other rehearsals. To be exact, the quickness with which they recognised the popular airs was not quite so spontaneous as invited guests in the stalls and dress circle were led to imagine ; having obtained a list of the songs that would be introduced, I went around to the schools, and the head teachers were kind enough to allow the boys and girls to hold a choir practice. But the effect of this display, given so soon as the orchestra had offered the preliminary chords, was staggering. The children were sometimes in the theatre (food was supplied in an interval) from one o'clock until

half-past seven, at which hour they, with open and undisguised reluctance, permitted themselves to be escorted home.

It is queer how memory is jerked and aroused by even a few bars of a once familiar air ; space and the years are obliterated. Mature folk, at the sound, become romantic ; gloomy features change and betray an animation that, you would have said, did not exist. Not long since I heard a cornet play ‘ The Man who broke the Bank at Monte Carlo,’ and as the refrain came, people near began to strut in the old Charles Coborn way. Even the most foolish words, allied to engaging music, stay on whilst better lines refuse to answer to the call. An absurd quotation continually recurs to me :

*‘ She can mop up almost anything from vinegar to glue,
But the last time she tasted water was in eighteen eighty-two ! ’*

In West End clubs, you will sometimes find a group of mature members—choosing the library or a retired corner of the smoking-room—their heads are in a bunch, and they are playing a game of recalling the popular songs of their youth. No repetitions allowed, and the first to omit to answer in his turn is, as the children say, he.

It keeps them as good as gold for hours.

A STORY told in private should be new ; for a story told in public this element is not, I think, indispensable. Offered to a large audience there is the likelihood that only the minority have heard the anecdote before, and some of them may not object to hearing it again. There was an Irish judge of whom it was declared that he had but six stories ; he never varied the telling of them, and his popularity at any London dinner-table was complete. On the other hand, there are men who have the gift of catching the newest yarn that is flying about town. At one time these birds were released in the neighbourhood of the Stock Exchange, but lean years in Throgmorton Street have induced a certain melancholy, and the sportsmen are fewer. The right kind of north countryman can fit you out for a whole season. (I once obtained four in a single journey from a Glasgow man who was captaining the steamer, Gibraltar to Tangiers.) The theatre owes any reputation for story telling in these days to Seymour Hicks and to Henry Ainley ; it depends mainly on the historical past. There is, for example, the incident of an actor who had been openly derided at rehearsal by the actress-manageress of the company. He went up afterwards to the lady's husband :

‘ If your wife insults me again,’ he said deliberately, ‘ please understand what will happen. I shall dashed well punch your nose ! ’

When Stephen Phillips wrote his poetical drama *Ulysses*, he and Tree were one afternoon at the back of the dress circle of His Majesty's, watching the scenery that had been arranged for the production. The scene-painter from the Haymarket strolled in, and was invited to give an opinion.

'All I can say is this, gentlemen,' he announced, frankly impressed. 'It will want some uncommon good words written up to it!'

Comyns Carr, the dramatist, and I used to exchange stray remarks overheard. He gave me a specimen found at Carlisle station. Two north countrymen were going by the carriage, one talking eagerly. 'And if I should outlive my wife, as I airnestly hope and pray I may do——'

Tree liked to tell a ridiculous incident which happened to him. He was coming back late at night after a Shakespeare week at Birmingham. At Rugby he had to change, and, the air being cold, he entered the waiting-room; a man and a woman there were quarrelling.

'Pretty kind of wife, you,' said the man bitterly. 'I know all about your goings on with that Captain Jackson. I've never seen the chap, but I can guess what he's like, and I realise now what you are like, and for two pins——'

He raised his fist, and Tree, stepping forward, intervened as peacemaker. ('I loomed over them,' he said.)

'My friend,' he ordered, with authority, 'stay your hand. I can give you the truth in regard to the matter you are discussing. I, as it happens, am Captain Jackson, and I assure you there are no grounds for the suspicions you entertain concerning

this pure, good, noble woman whom you have the honour to call your wife. And now, both of you come and have a drink in the refreshment room, and——'

The bell rang for the London train, and Tree had to cancel the offer and hurry away. As he went out to the platform, an amused and identifying shout came from the husband :

' Good old 'Amlet ! '

It is queer that Americans so often bring over stories which fail to amuse us ; it is painful to think of the effect of our attempts submitted to them. Differences of opinion on matters of high diplomacy will always exist between ourselves and the United States so long as we are not at one in this matter. A writing man tells me that in the course of a six months' visit, starting at New York, he heard but two stories which he reckoned worth putting into his kit-bag ; he may have been a little difficult to please. I have already mentioned Robert Barr ; he had much of the humour of the country which he adopted in infancy, and his repertory was extensive and peculiar. No one could tell a story in his presence without finding it capped by a better one.

' Reminds me——' he would say in his drawling voice.

When he edited a new weekly in London, one of the proprietors looked in and commented on the first number. The proprietor objected to some verses inserted to fill a column.

' These are the lines I mean,' he said, pointing. ' " Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars——" Signed, Colonel Lovelace. Now if I

was you,' persuasively, 'if I was you, I wouldn't take any more stuff from these Aldershot chaps!'

Robert Barr said that a very important American financier, rich in wealth but deficient in humour, came over here, and a young Chelsea artist managed to obtain a letter of introduction to the great man. The youth called, and the matter of a portrait was discussed. The financier had a large red nose, and on the table, because strawberries were out of season, ripe strawberries had been set on a plate. An interruption occurred from the telephone. In turning to resume the discussion, the financial gentleman observed that the Chelsea youth was glancing from the fruit to the nose; evidently making a colour comparison.

'Shan't need to have that portrait done!' said the American curtly.

Robert Barr declared that he knew a non-loquacious barber. An elderly customer took the chair heavily; he had the merest outward fringe of hair to be treated.

'Shall I remove my collar?' he asked.

'No,' answered the barber. 'Needn't take your hat off unless you like!'

Arnold Bennett may not be what is called the born story teller—excepting in book form—but there is one I shall always place to his credit. Of a young widow, returned from the interment at Kensal Green, and noticed, by a scandalised neighbour, to be dancing light-heartedly on the lawn.

'Really, really!' protested the neighbour, shocked. 'Do try to bear in mind that you have only just put away a husband who was universally respected for his public spirit and for his private generosity. Do

think how good he was to the poor ; how amiable his manner towards everybody.'

' I feel sure,' agreed the widow, ' that your description is perfectly correct, but, you see, there was just this about it. I didn't like him ! '

Sir William Treloar has an unerring faculty for producing the right story at the right moment. He used to tell an incident that happened at Alton. A severe downpour occurred at lunch time, and he remarked to the Hampshire girl who was waiting at table that it made one think of the Flood. She looked puzzled.

' The great Flood,' he explained, ' and the Ark. Surely you have read about it.'

' I never have no time to look at the newspapers,' she said.

A Fleet Street club once arranged a summer's day trip up the river ; the members arrived at Paddington on the Sunday morning, and all were not attired in the costume usual for such outings. Sir William overheard a conversation between two Great Western porters.

' What do you make of 'em, James ? '

' What do I make of 'em, 'Enery ? To tell the truth, I can't quite decide. Either they 're mad, or else they 're uncommon distinguished ! '

Anthony Hope Hawkins has a story of two old club-men who dined at a corner table by themselves every night. When the news came that the elder man had passed away, the other at once took the chair that had its back to the wall. Somebody approached him, and ventured to offer sympathy on the loss of a true and constant friend.

' Curse him ! ' ejaculated the old member violently.

‘ He kept me out of this seat for five-and-twenty years ! ’

Once, on the way to a dinner, I invented an anecdote because I knew an anecdote would be needed ; it has since travelled far, and has become known. A nurse and a little girl walking through a London square ; the child asks for an explanation of the straw lying outside one of the houses. The nurse answers that a dear baby has, the day before, arrived there.

‘ Seems to have been awfully well packed ! ’ remarks the child.

A Member of Parliament came up after the dinner, and assured me he had been telling the story for years ; he seemed to imply that he resented the infringement of copyright. I have often wondered if he was straying from exactitude ; it is only fair to admit that one can never be confident in assuming originality.

Some folk are collectors only. Murray Carson, an actor and a dramatist—with Louis N. Parker he wrote *Rosemary* and several other plays—was one of these ; he always knew every story that was going about London, and I feel assured he never contributed to the score off his own bat. He had been secretary to Dr. Parker of the City Temple, and he treasured a cutting from a London daily journal in which the pressman, ignoring the objective of appeals of the kind, declared the minister offered ‘ one of the most eloquent prayers ever addressed to a congregation.’

The Arthur Roberts stories were popular in the ‘nineties. Of Arthur looking in at a billiard match.

‘ What ’s the score, marker ? ’

‘ Three plays two, sir.’

‘ Close game, close game ! ’ remarked Arthur.

Of himself going home unusually early—three A.M.—and, as he could not sleep, rising from bed and dressing afresh at six o’clock to go out for a walk. As he stood at the hall door, a constable went by.

‘ Good night, Mr. Roberts ! ’ said the constable.

And an incident, concerning a provincial drama. The first act was good, but a young couple had brought their baby, and the infant did not care for the stage representation, and said so. The acting manager gave a warning. Either the baby would have to be kept quiet, or its parents would take it out and have their entrance money refunded. The baby was induced to sleep. The second act proved extremely unattractive ; the young father became restive.

‘ Maudie ! ’

‘ Yes, George.’

‘ Might jest give the kid a pinch, will you ! ’

Mrs. Finucane, who had given years to India, brought home stories of an absent-minded Bishop there ; two of them I passed on to *Punch* artists. One, not reckoned suitable for the journal, had to do with an occasion when he had been requested to say a few words of comfort to a widower, standing near an open grave in the freshly extended part of the burying-ground.

‘ Good afternoon, my dear sir,’ said the Bishop, approaching genially, ‘ good afternoon. Our new cemetery is—er—filling up nicely ! ’

Miss Edith Onians, an industrious social worker in Melbourne, told me that one evening she en-

countered in Collins Street a member of the lads' club of which she was secretary ; he was in a riotous mood, and she decided to say nothing at the moment. On the following night, when he arrived at the club, she took him to task.

' And, as a consequence,' said Miss Onians, at the end of the address, ' you have now a splitting headache, your mouth is parched, and you wonder if life is worth living.'

' That 's correct, miss,' confessed the lad ruefully. ' I can see you 've been through it like the rest of us !'

Starr Jameson could tell a story well ; he had also a neat trick of comment. At a house near Buckingham Gate, the editor of the *Times* was telling us at lunch the news brought by his Petrograd correspondent, home on holiday. It was after the revolution, and allusion was made to Kerensky, the temporary leader of the movement. It seemed that Kerensky was living at the Winter Palace ; Mme. Kerensky had been ordered to take some distant apartments, and Kerensky's close companion was a lady of the opera.

' Oh, oh,' said Starr Jameson. ' Then he is not quite the pure dreamer we have been led to believe !'

In the way of criticism, the most severe, I think, was made on a rather thin lady—herself the owner of a sharp tongue—who once played, in a very light garment, the boy in *Julius Caesar*. At supper afterwards, we were discussing the evening, and the thin lady's performance came up for judgment.

' A photographic term occurs to me,' said a young woman sweetly. ' " Under-developed and over-exposed ! " '

On the same lines of acidity was the answer given by Miss Constance Collier, who was then playing at His Majesty's. A lady, after a career of scandalous adventure, had taken a London theatre, and was doing rather well.

'She will soon be at the head of her profession,' remarked some one.

'Of hers, perhaps,' said Miss Collier, 'not of mine!'

E. S. Willard, the actor, told me this. A customer of a bank, finding himself in a desperate financial corner, looked in at his bank and made an appeal to the new manager. 'Certainly not,' answered the new manager promptly. 'Nothing in the shape of an overdraft can be allowed. Entirely out of the question.' The customer was going when the manager recalled him.

'Owing to an accident,' he said confidentially, 'I have had to get a glass eye fitted, and I am inclined to be pleased with the result. Now, you have never seen me before; just make a close inspection and say which, in your opinion, is the artificial one.' The caller pointed. 'Quite right,' admitted the bank official reluctantly; 'but tell me, how did you guess?'

'I fancied,' answered the customer pointedly, 'that I detected a gleam of sympathy in it!'

Another of Willard's concerned a doleful, muffled-up passenger, of whom a fellow-traveller begged an explanation of melancholy.

'Bought a ticket,' said the muffled man. 'Derby sweep. Sold it for the half-crown I gave for it. 'Orse has come in first, and I might have took eighty-five pound.'

‘Terrible luck,’ cried the fellow-passenger. ‘Dreadful misfortune. Why, you must feel almost inclined to cut your throat.’

‘I ’ave!’ said the man.

It is not easy to decide which is the better endowment; the ability to tell, or the gift to listen. I knew excellent representatives of the two types in James Welch and Richard le Gallienne, at a period when they were on good terms, and each played his part remarkably well. The complete listener adopts the instruction given by the earnest photographer:

‘Do not, I implore of you,’ he urged the sitter, ‘allow the intellect to recede from the features!’

A good anecdote, like a kind word, can never die. It sometimes has to be sent into retirement for a while; when it emerges a new generation has sprung up, and the veteran receives a hearty welcome. But it has to be told well. I am perhaps taking too much on myself in venturing to give advice to the young raconteur; the only counsel I want to offer is that before telling a story he shall make certain that he is letter perfect. He should leave nothing to chance. Unless he takes these precautions he will range himself amongst the flounders who interrupt themselves by saying:

‘Oh, but perhaps I ought to have mentioned first of all——’

And:

‘Afraid I’m telling it wrongly. Let me start afresh!’

Do not appeal continually to the listener to inform you and check you if he has heard the story; the probability is that, if necessary, he will—as they

say at public meetings—signify the same in the usual way.

Scotsmen and Jews are equally admirable in telling stories ; the wise allow both to recite yarns against themselves, under which scheme every one is satisfied. The man to be respected is he who furnishes himself with but one story, and goes through life with nothing else to drop in when the offertory is taken. I know an artist who, so far as my knowledge goes, has never told any story but this. Of three Londoners as colonists out in the back of beyond. Cooking a dismal failure, and two, conferring apart, agree that the third shall go home, marry the girl of whom he is always speaking in the accents of romance, and bring her out.

‘ I ’ve noticed it,’ says the third gloomily, on this decision being communicated. ‘ Noticed it all along. Whenever there ’s any really unpleasant and distasteful work to be done, it ’s always me that’s picked out to do it ! ’ I have a lurking suspicion that one day the artist will astonish his friends by giving them a different story. Up till now it has not happened.

Of the professional story tellers I think Lionel Brough was far and away the best. He was an excellent imitator ; his yarns were always good ; he had just the correct touch of geniality that so many fail to achieve. There is glibness now, and rapidity, but—— Oh well, I liked him, and, anyway, one must now and again be a praiser of times gone by. If I were asked to indicate his lawful successor, I think I should point to Walter Churcher. I dare say you have heard Walter Churcher tell his story of the passenger who, having to wait for two hours at a country station, sauntered across to a

meadow, where the station-master was batting to the office boy's bowling. No success appeared to attend the lad's efforts, and the passenger offered to take the ball.

'Wish you would, sir,' said the office boy earnestly. 'He's been in for three weeks!'

I heard a Bishop remark in conversation at a dinner-table, in a sonorous way, 'One has a special affection for Lancashire. One recalls that one's mother was born there.' The northern county sends recruits to the London variety stage, but, without any desire to start a fresh War of the Roses, I think Yorkshire beats it easily in any competition for story telling. I met, not long since, half a dozen men at a house in a Yorkshire town. The six told anecdotes, and I declare that through dinner and after dinner I heard none that I had heard before, and all were good. The west country, I fancy, is disposed to be indolent in this respect; Devonshire folk, when I meet them, tell me the stories that my father, who came from Bideford, used to relate to me. The Welsh folk are appreciative of yarns, but their own shelves are not exactly crowded, and in their case, too, there is an historical flavour. Wherever the commercial traveller goes, there anecdotes are distributed; I suspect he is exceedingly careful not to mix the qualities.

Tree used to say to me at times, with an air of seriousness, when we met at anybody's house:

'I propose to tell anecdotes H to K inclusive. You, I think, had better give, from your list, seventeen to twenty-two.'

It is the fact that some keep a kind of index system

for easy reference ; certainly the story that only occurs to us as we are going down the staircase is not of great value. Ere now I have received a postcard, 'The yarn I was trying to think of last night goes as follows.' Barter is the very wise rule of the trade. No one can advance to the counter and expect to obtain a story, unless he brings one for exchange. May I suggest that the raconteur should never be spurred into action ? Leave him—or the raconteuse—alone, and in due course a start will be made. In my experience I have seen the best of them (being harried and appealed to by an over-anxious host) go right back to the stables of silence, and utter no word for the rest of the evening.

The unexpected finish is everything in a tale, whether spoken or written. If, in the last moment, you can introduce a note of surprise, then your anecdote is safe ; the past is forgiven, the future looked to with hopefulness. Having confidence in your anecdote, do not be deterred because it fails to obtain immediate approval. A French actor told me that, at the Théâtre Français, a genial old porter had the duty of handing back plays to young dramatists.

'There is always God,' he said encouragingly. 'And the Odéon !' Most anecdotes have to find their Odéon.

Admirals of the Fleet like to tell this story :

An inspecting officer arrived to go over the list of a ship's stores. He noted an item, 'One wood shove,' and, his curiosity aroused, asked for a description. The captain, not admitting ignorance, said it should be fetched at once, and gave orders

to a lieutenant. The lieutenant, also affecting knowledge, passed the order on.

‘Yes, sir!’ said Mr. Chips, the carpenter, answering alertly. ‘You want to see one of them wood shoves. Now, it’s a funny thing, but we’ve jest used up the last of ’em. The last of them wood shoves has only jest been used up!’

The explanation was transmitted to the inspector of stores. He said he still desired to look at a wood shove; the captain guaranteed that one should be ready by the morrow. That night, carpenters had to be busy and inventive in manufacturing a hitherto non-existent contraption of wood, with bolts and screws to make it look impressive and business-like. It was on view the next morning when the official again came on board.

‘Good!’ he said approvingly. ‘Never happen, oddly enough, to have seen one before. Show me how it’s worked!’

The captain, in no way taken aback, gave sharp instructions to the lieutenant; the lieutenant, unperturbed, spoke to a midshipman.

‘Mr. Rawlinson,’ he ordered, ‘get half a dozen men, and take them through wood shove practice.’

‘Yes, sir,’ said the youngster promptly. By the aid of what appeared to be a brain wave, he issued commands to heave the bulky article overboard. As it disappeared, the captain and the rest gave a sigh of relief. The inspector was not, however, satisfied or convinced. He directed that the ship’s company should be called on deck.

‘I desire some information,’ he said, ‘about what appears to be called a wood shove. I can’t help thinking that a mystery——’

‘ Beg pardon, sir,’ interrupted a man, stepping forward, ‘ but I fancy I can clear this up. I was told to write out what stores I’d got under my control, and my edication not being what it ought to be, I put down “one wood shove.” What I meant to write was “one wooden shovel”!’

And there is, too, as an example of precision, the incident of the gunner’s mate examining the class.

‘ What are the advantages of a turret over a barbette?’

‘ The crew has better protection,’ said a member of the class alertly, ‘ the arc of fire——’

‘ You’ve got it all muddled,’ complained the gunner’s mate. ‘ ’Cording to this book, you ought to answer “Many.” And then I say “Name them”!’

Stories in the domestic circle have a long existence, and it is one of the privileges of the master of the household that he shall tell them at his own pleasure and discretion. I know a house where the following incident is always recited, and I believe it will be told until the law is altered to make further repetition a sound excuse for divorce. The lady of the house, it appears, left her muff in a hansom. Her husband wrote to Scotland Yard; received a prompt and satisfactory reply. On the way to Whitehall to recover her muff, the lady lost this document. Nevertheless, she went on, and succeeded in persuading the officials that the muff belonged to her. Brought it away by taxi-cab, and, having paid and dismissed the driver, ascertained that the article was no longer in her possession. She proceeded once

more to Scotland Yard, waited there until the muff was brought in, and as she was going out the official called to her :

‘ Excuse me, madam,’ he said, ‘ but don’t you think you may as well take the muff with you ! ’

I suppose no household is completely happy unless it has a target, and it is to the eternal honour of the mother that she is often willing, in the interests of serenity, to accept the position. And so long as the chaff is well natured, little harm is done, and affection discovers itself increased.

I raise my hat to good-tempered mothers.

THE subject of deportment is always interesting, because it furnishes a wide and varied scope for criticism. Not one of us is so ill-behaved that we cannot discover fault in the manners of other people, and the qualifications of a critic are by no means far to seek. You can take the position on the grounds of experience, of upbringing, of seniority, or, if the worst comes to the worst, on no grounds at all. My own plea for taking a share in the game is that I have lived in one town for many years, and the town and its people continue to hold my affection.

London is, now and again, reviewed by critics who have been absent for some time; one came, not long since, from no farther off than Paris is, and he seems to have gazed at our folk with open-eyed astonishment.

‘All go about their business,’ he writes, ‘with never the trace of a smile!’

It is possible he did not choose for inspection the happiest quarters of town. Without pretending to know London better than many people, I think I could draw a map and colour it in a way that indicated with some degree of accuracy the spirits of the residents. The colouring would be brightest, as with the accent, away from the river; the north might have a more cheerful tint than the south.

The greatest exhilaration is to be discovered among the well-occupied folk; the gloomiest visages are

owned by those who, whether in the east or the west, have little to do but to count the hours. Excepting in the Minories and thereabouts, where the alien immigrant settles down, we do not gesticulate. Handwriting is learnt, but not hand speaking. If, in arguing with an immigrant, you could tie his wrists, he would be speechless ; there is here perhaps a hint to diplomatists who have to deal with Eastern questions. We do not laugh publicly if we can avoid doing it. The Londoner, in a tight corner or at a crisis, says and does none of the things suggested by the novel of adventure or the third act of a tragedy. The burglar, for instance, secured by a policeman, contents himself by remarking :

‘ It ’s a fair cop, governor ! ’

Whereas, according to the written rules, he ought to become eloquent on the unkind ordering of fate, and autobiographical. At the Old Bailey, the man in the dock frequently shows less concern than some spectator at the back of the gallery ; the judge on the bench is often more disturbed in mind than the prisoner. You read of condemned men who, on the morning of the execution, make a hearty breakfast, and appear unconcerned ; prison governors assure me there is no exaggeration in the reports, and that if any one, at these grim scenes, exhibits nervousness, it is the hangman. Here is an incident which has whatever merit there may be in perfect truth. At Pentonville, twenty years ago, a Londoner known as Scotty was under sentence. He had quarrelled with a Guardsman in a public-house ; the Guardsman had taken Scotty’s money, and Scotty declared that unless the money was handed back, he would knife the other ; the Guardsman did not

refund. On the morning fixed for the execution, it was arranged that the chaplain should look in on Scotty at eight o'clock for a last heart-to-heart talk. For some reason the reverend gentleman was late in arriving at the condemned cell.

'Now then, chaplain,' said Scotty rallying, 'this won't do, you know; this won't do. Eight o'clock you ought to have been 'ere, and now it's 'alf-past. I shall be seeing your gov'nor at nine, and I'll tell him about you!'

It is an extreme illustration of the mask of imperturbability which the townsman is always ready to put on.

I note that the Londoners who wear uniform are entitled to high prizes in any competition for good behaviour. There is some quality in brass buttons which induces a man who wears them to show courtesy; I think the brass buttons make him feel he is above the common standard, and, by reason of that, a certain tenderness for lesser folk has to be exhibited; a toleration and a patience towards those who have not achieved the brass button stage. Take the omnibus conductor. He used to dress much as he pleased, with the addition of a badge exhibiting a number. In those days, his colleague, the driver, wore a silk hat, heavy clothing, and his nose was scarlet. The two were on variable terms with each other; sometimes friendly, sometimes of open enmity, and they carried on their disputes so that everybody could see, and hear, and, if necessary, take sides. The omnibus conductor of those times was ever ready to quarrel with a passenger, and passengers entered into the sport with energy and appetite. I fancy ladies of the suburbs used to remark:



According to HASSALL

‘ It ’s a fine day. Let ’s go out, and have a row with a bus conductor ! ’

And they prodded him in the back with the ferrule of umbrellas ; they harried him with superfluous inquiries ; they threatened to report him for inattention to his duties ; they hinted that he was not, in the best and truest meaning of the word, a gentleman. The conductor answered with spirit, beating them at their own game, and omnibus journeys became a wrangle and an altercation. To-day, with the official in uniform, he is treated with deference, and he, on his side, has a code of etiquette which breaks down only when circumstances prove unduly trying. If taxi-cab drivers are sometimes wanting in the little courtesies, this is due to the fact that their uniform is incomplete, and that they are ever brooding over the cost of petrol. Attendants outside cinemas furnish a proof of what happens when uniform runs riot, degenerates into wild excess. Being apparelled something like an officer in the Austrian army, something like a vice-admiral, something like a L.C.C. fireman, they put on an air of austerity and command out of proportion to the task they carry out and the wages they receive. I know one of them, and the man, when he is at the doors of his picture palace in Shaftesbury Avenue, and when, in ordinary clothes, he wheels out the newest infant on Wandsworth Common—— Like, but oh, how different !

Uniformed railway-men have always been experts in behaviour, and this is the more to their credit when it is remembered that many of us, on approaching a railway station, immediately become, not exactly bereft of sanity, but partially demented.

We get the idea that every one is conspiring against us, and that only by a fierce display of resolution will we be able to reach the end of the journey. Our initial step is to demand at the booking-office a ticket for the station from which we propose to start ; however gently the slip is pointed out, we reckon it a cause for additional exasperatedness. From this point everything goes awry. Directed to go on platform Number One, we choose any other platform, and declare we were clearly and particularly instructed not to go to platform Number One. If there are two portions of the train, our choice is prompt, definite, and erroneous ; labels on carriages make no appeal to us, and we select, with unerring inaccuracy, any class of compartment but that mentioned on our ticket. This ticket we sometimes lose and invariably mislay, and, having mislaid it, swear it was never issued. With such people to mollify, and cajole, and persuade, the wonder is not that railway officials sometimes take an unexpected holiday from work, but that they should ever do anything else.

The railway passenger has seldom hesitated to urge his right to complain ; I submit that, in his desire to preserve tradition, he is inclined to overdo it. If adverse criticism is to be effective, there should at times come praise, but I suppose the railway passenger who obtains genuine satisfaction in taking a one-sided view is not likely to substitute the calmer joys of impartiality. Meanwhile, in the interests of the general travelling public, compartments might be reserved, especially for long trips, marked ' Grumblers Only ! ' Any one found making ejaculations of discontent or engaging in violent argu-

ment in any other compartment to be placed, if a light article, on the rack, and, if heavy, thrown out at the next station to finish the journey by goods train.

I think you will find the worst travelling manners, not in the first nor in the third, but in the second class ; that perhaps is why some railways, in a fit of annoyance, have cancelled the second class. It is the aspiring folk who, all London over, sin most grievously in this respect. In order to convey to lookers-on an idea of their own importance, they bully waiters at restaurants, harass shop assistants and junior clerks, and, generally speaking, throw flints at people who cannot reciprocate. Here is the acid test of deportment. At times they are unlucky in their environments, and their attempts are not so successful as they wish and try to believe ; the scandalous detail is that they should ever imagine it is an estimable thing to do. They offer an air of self-complacency which suggests a belief that their procedure is worthy of high compliments ; they glance around in search of indications of agreement. Doubt may sometimes enter the second class mind, but by reciting the particulars of stirring contests of the past—wherein it is evident, to all but themselves, that they were entirely in the wrong—they endeavour to support the theory that they are always in the right. Education, in the ordinary sense, does not help them. The possession of money is by no means an infallible cure.

Imperfect manners too—and this I ought to be communicating in a whisper—are to be found amongst the fairly well-to-do ladies of the distant

suburbs. They travel to the centre of London, and I fancy they become raspish on finding that, in Oxford Street, their importance is not recognised. So they talk loudly in shops, they raise voices in restaurants; at concerts and afternoon performances in the theatre they never cease to exchange conversation about domestic affairs. They do everything the management begs them to refrain from doing. They furnish invented particulars of the lives of the folk on the stage.

‘Oh yes, my dear. If she could only keep away from drugs——’

‘Not a bad actor, I admit, but the way he treats his present wife——’

Heaven forbid that I should be over-critical of their years; I was once middle-aged myself. Whatever fault there is in belonging to the middle class, I share with them. But their behaviour away from home, and detached from the supervision of their own friends, does fail to reach the stage of excellence, and truth must take precedence of chivalry in describing them. Watch them as they rush from the lift to the Tube train! No tigress escaped from the Zoological Gardens could show more of fury or a less regard for others; you might think from the violence displayed that honour, life, and a best hat were at stake. Once in the Tube train, they glare at their fellow-passengers as though questioning the right to travel, and they bring the deadly artillery of their eyes to bear on any young girl who has excellent ankles, and is generous enough to show them.

For compensation, certain types in London pro-

vide such admirable examples of good temper that they ought to have been invested, ere now, with medals, and mentioned gratefully in a vote of thanks passed by both Houses. Their features radiate serenity. The tone of their voices is reassuring. The flustered, the hysterical, and the desolate sometimes make an onrush at them in the thoroughfares, and go away, after a brief interview, composed and satisfied. It is due to them that London has the reputation of being a good-tempered town.

Omnibus inspectors, for instance, at points like Charing Cross must set out on their daily task with an enormous store of placidity, a resolution to let nothing them dismay. Their general knowledge is astonishing ; I fancy they were sharp lads at school, with the right arm up at once when the teacher put the question of thirteen times thirteen, and the precise exports of Kamschatka. London is, to them, an open book.

They know all about Fortis Green, and how to get there ; they can give information concerning Woodpecker Road, New Cross, although they may not be able to state, in reply to the question, that old Mrs. Penberthy still lives at No. 39 in the road. I hope they keep a note of the more eccentric applications made to them, and that one day, when retirement comes, they may write a volume on the subject.

There is, too, a City policeman—Sir William Orpen ought to do his portrait—who at times stands framed in the ground floor entrance to the cells and kitchens of the Mansion House. A burly official, he has such an aspect of open cheerfulness that worried merchants and rueful junior clerks

brighten at the sight of him, and even stockbrokers go on their way comforted, exhilarated, glad.

The policeman of London has always been a model of calm, unruffled behaviour ; Continental delegates arrive here, at frequent intervals, to learn his secret, and go home more puzzled, more envious than before. The London policeman is not made by the wave of a magic wand. He goes through, in his apprentice days, a course of training that in its many details has the intention of converting him from an ordinary raw citizen into a polished, serene official with a quality of forbearance that, of course, has its limitations ; any one who puts an unfair strain on those limitations knows what to expect. The best of us are liable to make mistakes, but not so many as the worst of us, and the worst of us can scarcely hope, when we commit error, that the London policeman will show excessive consideration. Treated properly, he is ready to serve out proper treatment.

As to the legal [courts. there] the old style of bullying magistrate has entirely vanished, and you will not find, in any of them, the counterpart of Mr. Fang. The London magistrate is a considerate official, with a patience that would put most of us to shame, and a wisdom and a shrewdness that are often put to rigid tests, and invariably serve him well. In the higher courts, where money or reputations are concerned, or both, the aggressive barrister is a character of the long, long past. The type you have to fear, if you are so unlucky as to be in the witness-box, submitting to cross-examination, is the suave, polite, soft-voiced legal gentleman, under whose gentle encouragement you find yourself stating on your oath that black is white, or, if he so wishes it,

green, yellow, scarlet. Beware of the bar when it smiles. The bar can still use the pathetic key when the occasion seems to demand it, and now that juries are mixed, may adopt it more generally.

The admirable deportment of London crowds is ever a riddle to the visitor. A London crowd waits quietly and patiently for hours to see a representative of a foreign country ; obeying the instructions of the police, and not encroaching beyond the lines fixed by the authorities. A London crowd sits or stands all day at Lord's or at the Oval in a state of but moderate comfort, and, with the exception of the applause given occasionally to active play by the teams, you will hear not a sound. A London crowd gathers to see men hauling a large iron safe to an upper floor, and during the period of watching, it refrains—and this shows amazing self-control—it refrains from offering a single word of advice to the labourers engaged on the task. A London crowd gazes steadily at firemen occupied with their more active duties, and the one ejaculation of disappointment comes when the flames have been subdued. A London crowd assembles on the Marble Arch side of Hyde Park, listening to violent, gesticulating, and for the most part alien orators, and gives no sign of exasperation, or of anything but the amiable tolerance that is shown on the south side of the Park by those who sit around the band.

The changed deportment of the street has made it easier for the pedestrian to look alive, and to remain alive. But no advice and no written instructions will prevent the Londoner from taking risks, especially

when he is in a hurry ; the one experience he cannot submit to resignedly is that of missing a conveyance. So you see folk here sprinting across roadways, declining to avail themselves of the refuges at the centre, and reading the evening newspaper as they fly ; one can only assume they are tired of life, or that they are over-insured. There are places in London where the danger has been recognised by the authorities—Hammersmith Broadway, Elephant and Castle, Queen Victoria Street—and subways are provided ; the Londoner ignores them.

The manners of the shop counter in London are the result of long tradition and a desire to create the atmosphere of good temper that induces a customer to buy mainly the articles which the customer, on entering the establishment, never dreamt of purchasing. Women can go into a West End shop, spend an hour or two there, and depart without disbursing money ; I often wish I had their pluck, their determination, their splendid restraint. No man of my acquaintance would dare to do such a thing, and it is not antagonism on the other side of the counter that deters him, but the facing of terrific civility.

Young women in the fashion shops call their customers by the title of ' Moddam.' I wonder why. No one else uses the word. Other attendants on Londoners call ladies up to an estimated age by the title of ' Missy ' ; there comes a truly awful moment in a woman's career when she finds herself called ' Ma ! ' or ' Mother ! ' If this conveys anything, it means that she and youthfulness have, in the view of public officials, been granted a judicial and permanent separation.

There is, in London shops and elsewhere, the 'k you system ; it is so general that we scarcely notice it, but we should observe and deplore its absence. Wherever money is tendered and accepted the receipt consists in the word ' 'K you ' ; the acknowledgment would be ' Thank you,' only that pressure of traffic is great and life is brief.

Sometimes the ejaculation is given in the form of a duet. Newspaper bought in the street. ' 'K you,' says the newsvendor, and ' 'K you,' says the purchaser. Season ticket shown at railway barrier. ' 'K you,' says the ticket-collector, and ' 'K you,' says the passenger. I once heard a man say it to an automatic machine on receiving the box of matches for which he had inserted a penny.

The word represents one of the minor courtesies, and it need not be assumed that the person using it is overpoweringly grateful ; the intent is but to recognise that a transaction has taken place.

As to the other queue system, this is an amazing illustration of increased decorum and the large improvement in London manners. In my hot youth—as I have hinted elsewhere—we used to assemble in a semicircular group at the pit doors of theatres as early as convenient, say an hour and a half before the opening of the doors. The crowd became larger. A certain amount of hustling and movement took place ; the crowd swayed to and fro with ever an eye on the closed doors ; umbrellas were broken, hats displaced, collars torn.

When the unbarring was heard, then a free fight ensued, with every one struggling for himself and herself, and chivalry and good temper had no place. Inside, and on the hard seats of the pit, the thirty

minutes of additional waiting was occupied by counting of bruises, mending of rent clothes, and an endeavour to recapture something like ordinary calm.

I need not describe the orderly methods which now exist of entering the more economical parts of a theatre. The queue system has become well engraved on our rules of etiquette. People line up for entry into public conveyances. They line up for stamps in the Post Office. They line up to get married at a popular church.

One might have suspected that all this deference to priority would be upset by the war, and the tumult and commotion of war, but the fact is that our men were never so even-tempered as when they came face to face with menacing obstacles. It used to be said by military experts that the British soldier groused only when he had nothing to grouse about. During the war there was assuredly no lack of material, but oftentimes there was a want of the leisure which is necessary for a really complete and satisfactory grouse.

Being now surrounded with all the dangers and anxieties of peace, our opportunities for complaining are less numerous, and it is but natural that advantage should be taken of them. Folk who stood the air raids with imperturbable equanimity become infuriated because a child cries next door. The quarrels of neighbours, in well-to-do flats in the West and in tenement dwellings in the East, are continuous; the parties arrive at police courts trembling with the weight of some grievance which, to the looker-on, seems no heavier than a feather. It all comes from the overcrowding of town; the

want of spaciousness, and at times the absence of other tasks. The legal profession depends, to a large extent, on the irascible tempers of the people. Something said, something written, something hinted at, and A. and B. work themselves up into a state of hot indignation ; they cancel all engagements, and A. is determined to have the law of B., and B. declares a resolve—though it shall cost his last penny—to have the law of A. The law, delighted to be called in, says that A. is undoubtedly in the right, and that B. cannot be reckoned in the wrong, and the dispute goes on until C.—who has no concern in the matter—C. interferes, and makes the tactful suggestion that both are in error ; whereupon A. and B. turn on C. and, in turning, renew friendship ; past differences are set away on the top shelf, and C. has to move to Hayward's Heath.

Public notices are phrased in London in a courteous style, and no one can take offence at the manner of them. Sometimes, in the anxiety to be unaggressive, they have a certain ambiguity. At a dancing hall in a western suburb, this notice is exhibited :

‘ The directors have the right to refuse admission to any lady they think proper ! ’

There has been a change in the London domestic circle. Old novels have placed on record the fact that sons called the father ‘ Sir ’ when addressing him ; they probably called him by other names, in his absence, if he declined to supply the allowances they thought necessary. Then came

some daring young adventurers who used the Papa and Pa; they were followed—the revolutionists of yesterday are the reactionaries of to-day—followed by sons who spoke of the Governor, and eventually Dad. I know a family where the father's name being Henry, his sons and daughters address him as Harry, or, alternatively, 'Dear old Sport,' and I think he rather likes it. In the case of husband and wife, you may still discover a rare case, here and there, where the strange custom survives of using the full and complete title. 'Mr. Johnson,' says the wife, at the breakfast-table, 'will you be so good as to pass along the marmalade?' And the husband, without looking up from his newspaper, says, 'If you had any sense, Mrs. Johnson, you'd realise that it is as near to you as it is to me!' At the opposite extreme is the household where, visiting for first time, you hear many allusions to Toddlekings. Toddlekings is so unreliable. Toddlekings ought to be here, and is not here. Toddlekings will have to be spoken to sharply. Toddlekings should really exhibit more thoughtfulness. And when the mother of the household arrives, with excuses for delay, you find that it is she, and not some favourite domestic animal, upon whom the name of Toddlekings has been imposed. As to brothers and sisters, there is, I imagine, a greater regard, although a method of frankness in speech between them, and the unauthorised borrowing of a tennis racquet may create resentment.

It is queer to think that there are members of families in the hard-up districts who never, in the whole of their lives, exchange an affectionate word. They have the same love for each other that we have,

but they do not express it. They have no occasion to write to each other. In a household of this kind, the people really do not see each other very often. The houses are small ; the rooms are crowded, and there is, indeed, no place like home for getting in the way and disturbing other members of the family. Thus, from the first childhood to the second, the rule is that one shall keep away from the house excepting when meals summon attendance, and even meals are often taken—excepting on Sunday—without the elaborate formality of sitting at table. The conditions of living there give no opportunity for the cultivation of friendship or the practice of deference, and it is those conditions which are to blame, and not the people themselves. Youngsters out of school play in the streets until it is time for them to go to bed, or later. When they begin to earn a livelihood, they exercise the right to come home at any hour that seems fit. And, marrying at a youthful age, they leave the old nest just as their parents are getting on speaking terms with them. After that, a christening may provide an excuse for meeting, or another marriage in the circle ; the one circumstance which can be depended on for bringing every one together is a funeral. A funeral brings out the politeness and good manners that a Londoner, at other times, does not always trouble to disclose.

In the minor districts of London, the folk have to submit to calls from the uninvited guests ; I often wonder if social workers realise the annoyance they sometimes create by knocking at doors, and entering houses, and putting a series of brisk and curious questions. We should resent it. The

callers themselves would resent it. A curate was appointed to a church in Hoxton, and on the first day he hastened around with the commendable idea of reforming the neighbourhood. At one tenement dwelling he pulled all the little brass knobs, banged at the knocker, and was stamping impatiently when a woman looked up from the basement.

‘Young man,’ she called out, ‘if it’s religion you’ve called about, we’re suited!’

In trying to make a fair judgment of the manners of town, it is to be remembered that a number of Londoners have no great command over the phrases of courtesy; the words have to be searched for when occasion demands them, and they are used hesitatingly and with a certain amount of awkwardness. But the intention is genuine; more sincere, in fact, than in the cases where the remarks have formed part of drill from youth upwards, and can be produced with glibness, alacrity. Indeed, the exchange of felicitations which takes place when educated folk meet often conveys nothing more than the lobbing and catching of the ball ere the innings starts. It is lack of words that is responsible for most of the charges brought at a police court in a hard-up neighbourhood. A dispute arises, and whereas, in our case, we could talk offensively for hours without repeating ourselves, the meagrely furnished parties find they are saying the same thing over and over again; this becomes tiresome and obviously futile, and then there is really nothing to do but to hit out with the fists. Following this comes, as I have hinted, an appearance before a magistrate, and each side, in its anxiety to make a good case, puts out the best efforts.

There is, in regard to public manners, a considerable element of unconscious imitation. One really cross-grained, discontented person, setting out of a morning, and giving the day to the City, or Whitehall, or elsewhere, can set up an epidemic of ill-behaviour that is easily caught and passed on by those who become infected. Also, a genial-tempered individual—old, young, or of scarcely any age at all—may furnish a pattern, an example which finds itself widely copied ; ere now, I have encountered a tram-car occupied, from end to end, by scowling, grumbling passengers ; a jolly baby enters, in charge of a proud mother and, by nods and becks and wreathed smiles, manages to convert the entire strength of the company from gloom to gaiety. There are so many Government departments in these days that one more—a Ministry for the Encouragement of Cheerfulness—might be created. On dull mornings it would send out representatives who had gained high degrees in an examination on good deportment, and it would be the duty of these officials to tackle the cantankerous and brighten them up. For myself, I should not care for the job, but there must be folk with a greater sense of public spirit who could undertake to fill the berth, and would not at the end of the day, from sheer physical and mental exhaustion, have to go, for a period of convalescence, into a nursing home.

I bring my comments on London and Londoners to a finish.

If, in reading, or skipping, these pages you chance to gain the impression that I have had a jolly life, you will be correct. If, in closing the book,

you suspect I have found it agreeable to set down views gained and incidents encountered during a not excessively adventurous career, there again you are entirely right. And I hope—as Oliver Wendell Holmes says at the end of one of his volumes—I hope you will love me none the less for anything I may have told you.

THE END

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